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Seborrheic Dermatitis

What is seborrheic dermatitis?

This is a very common skin condition that causes a red, scaly, itchy rash. The rash most commonly occurs on the scalp, sides of the nose, eyebrows, beard area, in the middle of the chest and in and behind the ears. Other areas of the skin may also be involved. Dandruff is the same thing as mild seborrheic dermatitis of the scalp.

Who gets seborrheic dermatitis?

Seborrheic dermatitis is common in infancy and in adults. In infants it can affect the scalp and is called "*cradle cap*". In infants it can also present in the diaper area and look like diaper rash. Stress, immune deficiency disorders and neurologic diseases like Parkinson's disease may make seborrheic dermatitis worse.

How can I treat my seborrheic dermatitis?

Although this condition is not curable and usually lasts a lifetime, it can be treated to keep it under control. For scalp involvement dandruff shampoos and topical corticosteroids can be used. **Shampoos containing tar, zinc pyrithione, selenium sulfide, sulfur, ketoconazole and/or salicylic acid are particularly helpful.** It is best to lather up your hair and let the shampoo stay on your scalp for 5 to 10 minutes before rinsing it out. You might try lathering up your scalp at the beginning of your shower or bath and letting it sit while you bathe the rest of your body. Then at the end of your bath or shower, rinse it out of your hair. Washing your hair in this manner on a daily basis will usually clear up the seborrheic dermatitis in a week or two. Once it is clear you can wash your hair with one of these shampoos less frequently (e.g., one to three times weekly) to maintain control. When dandruff shampoos alone are not adequate, usually a corticosteroid solution is added that typically is applied to the scalp once or twice daily as needed to maintain control. **For other areas of skin involvement 1 to 2.5 % hydrocortisone cream applied once or twice daily is usually effective.** Topical ketoconazole cream can be tried in patients who fail to respond to hydrocortisone cream. Rarely higher potency corticosteroid preparations are needed.

