Hair and scalp conditions

Amayeza Info Centre

Scalp conditions also include eczema, psoriasis and acne, which are not limited to the scalp and are best referred to a doctor for diagnosis.

Hair and scalp conditions fall into two categories:

- Conditions affecting the hair and hair follicle such as lice
- Conditions affecting the scalp such as dandruff

Conditions affecting the hair and hair follicle

- **Lice**
  Lice are tiny, grey, parasitic insects that suck blood from the scalp. The first sign can be an itchy scalp 1-2 weeks after infestation. On examining the hair, small white eggs or nits are seen close to the scalp, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. Contrary to popular belief, a lice infestation has no bearing on cleanliness or hygiene and is transmitted via direct contact. In the event of a lice outbreak, advise parents to tie up their children’s long hair so that it does not fly about, increasing the chance of contact with other children’s hair.

  Whatever treatment you recommend, remember that all hairbrushes, combs, hats etc. must be washed with medicated shampoo, left in the hot sun or washed in very hot water. Bedding and towels need to be washed in very hot water. Parents must use a fine-toothed comb to meticulously comb the hair, thereby removing eggs or nits. If the scalp is inflamed or infected, if the lymph glands are swollen or if the patient has a headache or fever, a doctor must be consulted.

  **Lyclear®** is a cream rinse containing permethrin. It is safe for use on adults and children older than 6 months of age. The hair must be washed and towel dried. Add Lyclear® to saturate the hair and scalp, especially behind the ears and the nape of the neck.

  One bottle is enough for shoulder length hair and provides protection for up to 2 weeks in 97-99% of cases. During an epidemic, Lyclear® may be applied once a week for a maximum of 8 weeks.
Repello® (Lice-B-Gone) contains geraniol as the active ingredient. It contains no pesticides. The whole contents of the bottle must be applied to dry hair, massaged in and left for 15 minutes. Comb the hair with a fine-toothed nit comb and then wash with normal shampoo. If lice persist, the process can be repeated after 24 hours.

Tea tree oil and lavender oil
A combination of 5-10 drops of these two oils can be added to base oil and massaged into the hair or they can be added to the final rinsing water, after washing hair.

Para Plus® Lice Spray is an aerosol preparation containing permethrin, piperonyl butoxide and malathion. A suggestion is to test the product for sensitivity on the inner arm. The product must be applied using short 1-second sprays until the entire scalp is moist and left on for no longer than 10 minutes. Wash with regular shampoo and use a nit comb to remove eggs.

Para Special® Lice Spray is an aerosol that contains bioallethrin and pipero-nyl butoxide. Spray the roots of the hair using 1-second sprays until the whole scalp is moist. Leave the product on the hair for 30 minutes, then shampoo with a regular shampoo and comb hair with the fine-toothed comb.

Gambece® and Quellada® Shampoos contain gamma benzene hexachloride. For use, 30 ml of either shampoo must be rubbed onto the hair and scalp, left for 4 minutes, rinsed off, the hair combed with a fine-toothed comb and the process repeated after 24 hours.

Conditions affecting the scalp

- **Seborrhoeic dermatitis (dandruff) and cradle cap**
  Seborrhoeic dermatitis is an inflammation of the upper layers of the skin, causing scales on the scalp, face and occasionally other areas. The condition often runs in families and cold weather usually makes it worse. Dandruff is a fairly common, relapsing condition where excessive scalp cells are shed in clumps, forming flakes which land on the shoulders and stick to clothes. It is associated with the yeast *Pityrosporum ovale*. However, stress, illness and many of the chemicals used on hair can produce dandruff. Dandruff affects both dry and oily scalps. If the scalp on examination is red and inflamed then a pharmacist or doctor should be consulted.

  In babies, seborrhoeic dermatitis may produce a thick, yellow, crusted scalp rash (cradle cap). Treat cradle cap by rubbing warm (not hot) olive or sweet oil onto the baby’s scalp, leaving it overnight and then combing the hair gently with a soft brush in the mor-ning. This should be repeated until the condition clears.

  Shampoos on the market that seem to control dandruff but are not a treatment for more severe dan-druff. An example is Head and Shoulders® shampoo which contains zinc pyrithione and which may be used every time the hair is washed in the same way as a regular shampoo.

  Selsun® 2,5% suspension contains 2,5% selenium sulphide which controls itching and scaling dandruff. Five to 10 ml of the medicated shampoo should be massaged into the scalp with warm water. The lather must be left on the scalp for 2 to 3 minutes then rinsed off and the whole process repeated again. Two applications a week for two weeks should control the dandruff but the product may be used weekly, biweekly or monthly as a follow up treatment if necessary. The patient must wash their hands after applying the product and care must be used not to get the product in their eyes, as it is irritating to the eye. If skin irritation occurs, the product must be discontinued.

  Denorex® shampoo contains coal tar solution and parachloro-metaxylenol. Wet hair, massage sham-poo into the hair, rinse and repeat. For best results use every second day for 10 days, then 2-3 times weekly thereafter. Avoid contact with eyes.

  **Fungal Scalp Infections**
  Fungal infections can be difficult to diagnose and if you are unsure, rather get the pharmacist or a doctor to help make a correct diagnosis.

  Niz Shampoo®
  Ketoconazole is the active ingredient and has activity against dermatophytes and yeasts causing fungal infections of the scalp. The affected areas should be washed with the shampoo and left on for 3-5 minutes before rinsing. For a condition called pityriasis versicolor, the application must be used once daily for 5 days. For seborrhoeic dermatitis, use twice weekly for 2 to 4 weeks.

  Pevaryl Foaming Sachets contain econazole and need to be used twice a week for 6 weeks. Wet the hair and
Table 1. OTC products to treat hair and scalp conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT Indication</th>
<th>DOSAGE FORM</th>
<th>DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regaine* Alopecia</td>
<td>Topical solution &amp; gel</td>
<td>1 ml applied to hair twice daily and left to dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyclear* Lice</td>
<td>Cream rinse</td>
<td>Wash and towel dry hair, then saturate hair with product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repello* Lice</td>
<td>Cream</td>
<td>Apply whole bottle to dry hair, leave for 15 minutes, then comb hair and wash with regular shampoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para Plus* Lice Lice</td>
<td>Spray</td>
<td>Spray in short bursts until whole scalp is moist, leave for less than 10 minutes, shampoo with regular shampoo and comb with a fine toothed comb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para Special* Lice Lice</td>
<td>Spray</td>
<td>Spray in short bursts until whole scalp is moist, leave for 30 minutes, then shampoo with regular shampoo and comb with a fine toothed comb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambex® &amp; Quelladara® Lice</td>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>Rub 30mls of the shampoo on the scalp, leave for 4 minutes, rinse, comb hair with a fine toothed comb and repeat after 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niz Shampoo* Fungal infections</td>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>Wash hair and leave for 3-5 minutes before rinsing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pevaryl® Foaming Sachets Fungal infections</td>
<td>Foaming solution</td>
<td>Wet hair, apply solution and leave to dry on the hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selsun® 2,5% Dandruff</td>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>5-10 ml must be applied to hair, left for 2-3 minutes, rinsed and repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denorex® Dandruff</td>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>Wet hair, lather, rinse, repeat. Use every 2nd day for 10 days and then 2-3 times weekly thereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc pyrithione Dandruff</td>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>Use as regular shampoo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>