

# SEBORRHOEIC DERMATITIS

Seborrhoeic dermatitis (also known as seborrhea or seborrheic eczema) is a skin disorder affecting the scalp, face, and trunk causing scaly, flaky, itchy, red skin. It particularly affects the sebum-gland rich areas of skin.

## CAUSES

The cause of seborrhoeic dermatitis remains unknown, although many factors have been implicated. The widely present yeast, *Malassezia furfur* is involved, as well as genetic, environmental, hormonal, and immune-system factors. The claim that seborrhoeic dermatitis is an inflammatory response to the yeast has not been proven. Those afflicted with seborrhoeic dermatitis have an unfavourable epidermic response to the infection, with the skin becoming inflamed and flaking.

In adolescents and adults, seborrhoeic dermatitis usually presents as scalp scaling (dandruff) or as mild to marked erythema of the skin during times of stress or sleep deprivation.

Seborrhoeic dermatitis is not contagious or related to diet, but it may be aggravated by illness, psychological stress, fatigue, change of season and reduced general health.

## SYMPTOMS

The condition's symptoms appear gradually and usually the first signs of seborrheic dermatitis are the flakes of skin called dandruff. The symptoms may occur anywhere on the skin of the face, behind the ears and in areas where the skin folds. These are common sites that become red, inflamed and flaky. The flakes can be yellow, white or grayish. In more rare cases, redness and flaking may occur on the skin near the eyelashes, on the forehead or around the sides of the nose. Other body areas where these symptoms occur are the chest and upper back. The symptoms of seborrheic dermatitis can appear basically on any part of the body where there is certain amount of hair and therefore follicles which might become inflamed. A sign that the condition has become more severe is the formation of thick, oily and yellow scales which might appear on the forehead, around the sides of the nose or on the skin near the eyelashes.

In more severe cases, yellowish to reddish scaly pimples appear along the hairline, behind the ears, in the ear canal, on the eyebrows, on the bridge of the nose, around the nose, on the chest, and on the upper back.

Commonly, patients experience mild redness, skin lesions and in some cases hair loss (scalp hair or facial hair). Other symptoms include patchy

scaling or thick crusts on the scalp, red, greasy skin covered with flaky white or yellow scales, itching, soreness and yellow or white scales that may attach to the hair shaft.

Many patients experience alternating periods of the symptoms, when they either improve or suddenly worsen. In adults, symptoms of seborrheic dermatitis may last from few weeks to even years.

In some cases, seborrheic dermatitis can become secondarily infected and lead to acne-like pimples or impetigo (bacterial skin infection).

## **TREATMENTS**

Treating seborrheic dermatitis is quite difficult to achieve given that there seem to be more than just one factor contributing to its development, but the condition can be held under control with few measures.

- **Topical treatments** such as shampoos, cleansers or creams/lotions that contain antifungal, anti-inflammatory, sebo-suppressive or keratolytic ingredients are recommended. Your Cosmetic Practitioner will formulate a topical cream/lotion suitable for your specific case and give you the appropriate instructions for use.
- **Photodynamic therapy** also known as phototherapy which uses a Blue LED light to inhibit the growth of Malassezia and reduce the inflammation is also recommended but a series of treatments is required 2-4 weekly with maintenance treatments when required. The key in a successful seborrheic dermatitis therapy is neutralizing the yeast.
- **A change in the diet** should be considered given that foods rich in antioxidants and beta-carotene are efficient in reducing the inflammation. A supplement such as Vital Greens may improve the symptoms of seborrheic dermatitis.
- **Anti-fungal foods** such as ginger, turmeric, sage, radish, coconut oil, oregano and olive oil when included in the daily diet may help in controlling the yeast growth.

## **NATURAL TREATMENTS**

- Aloe Vera applied topically.
- Tea tree oil: diluted to 5% applied topically.
- Probiotics
- Vitamin B Complex
- Zinc
- There is evidence that there is relationship between seborrheic dermatitis and intestinal yeast, such as candida. An antifungal diet

consisting of the elimination of sugar should reduce seborrheic dermatitis.

## **COSMETIC TREATMENTS**

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- **Laser Genesis** – **Laser Genesis** is a non-painful treatment using a vascular laser to gradually build up heat in the deep dermal layers of the skin. In this area there are damaged small capillaries and yeasts which can be heated up and consequently broken down to reduce the visible signs of seborrheic dermatitis on the skin. The treatment is repeated 4 weekly for a series of 3-6 treatments and then maintenance treatments are recommended 6 monthly as required. Apart from initial redness and slight swelling, which settles down in a matter of minutes to hours, there is no debilitating after effects from this treatment.