



How to Manage a Symptomatic Scalp:

A Sebco™ scalp treatment review

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Our scalp is unlike the rest of our skin: it has a high follicular density and a high rate of sebum production. The relatively dark and warm environment provides ideal conditions for fungal and parasitic infections. The scalp is not spared from inflammatory conditions either. Visible flaking has a negative impact on patients' quality of life. A correct clinical diagnosis is important especially since many of the common scalp conditions have similar symptoms and features. This article concentrates on the scaly scalp conditions: dandruff, seborrhoeic dermatitis, tinea capitis and psoriasis and a common management approach.

Characteristics of Conditions

All four conditions have scale in common to varying degrees:

- In dandruff scale is more white or grey
- In seborrhoeic dermatitis yellowish and greasy
- In tinea capitis white and dense
- In psoriasis silver-grey and often thicker

Pruritus may also feature in all of the conditions although it is variable in its degree and may be only mild in dandruff, tinea capitis and psoriasis. Distinguishing characteristics are presence of inflammation, alopecia and malassezia. Whilst there is no inflammation in dandruff, seborrhoeic dermatitis and psoriasis are characterised by this clinical sign and it can also be observed in tinea capitis e.g. in kerions. Alopecia is a possible consequence in tinea capitis and psoriasis only. The organism malassezia has been implicated with dandruff and seborrhoeic dermatitis but less so with psoriasis. In tinea capitis microsporum and trichophyton species are the causative organisms.

Recommended Treatment Routes

Taking mycology samples for analysis is paramount for the identification of organisms and the targeting of treatment and plays particular relevance in the management of tinea capitis. Dandruff, seborrhoeic dermatitis and psoriasis benefit from a combination of treatments: keratolytic, antiproliferative and antimicrobial agents.

In milder conditions shampooing and using a keratolytic e.g. salicylic acid may be sufficient treatment. Some shampoos contain an antifungal e.g. ketoconazole which can improve flaking. Antiproliferatives, e.g. coal tar, reduce epidermal proliferation and dermal infiltrates. Topical steroids as adjunctive treatment may be helpful in patients with inflammatory component.

Treatments need to be convenient and cosmetically acceptable. Combination treatments increase adherence. For the management of dandruff, seborrhoeic dermatitis and

psoriasis a combination of coal tar solution, salicylic acid and sulphur in an ointment formulation, such as 'Sebco™' scalp treatment, is a valuable option. Treatment with a combination product ensures softening and removing of scale and at the same time acts as an antiproliferative.

"Treatment with a combination product of coal tar solution, salicylic acid and sulphur in an ointment formulation ensures softening and removing of scale and also acts as an antiproliferative."

Partnering Pomades and Scalp Steroids

Combination treatments as mentioned before are convenient and increase patient adherence as various treatment steps are accomplished with one application.

Applying a combination product, e.g. Sebco™, containing coal tar solution, salicylic acid and sulphur first to soften and remove scale, before applying a topical steroid as an active anti-inflammatory component, enhances the action and overall treatment outcome.

This is important as patients are not just concerned about the scale and its associated shedding, but also the itch. This can be particularly disturbing at nighttime and together with the shedding of scale leads to further embarrassment for the patient.

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 **Watch Sebco™ Application Video**



Abbreviated Prescribing Information for Sebco™

Please refer to the full Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) prior to prescribing.

Presentation: Ointment containing coal tar solution 12%, salicylic acid 2%, sulfur for external use 4%. **Uses:** Treatment of common scaly scalp disorders such as psoriasis, eczema, seborrheic dermatitis and dandruff. **Dosage:** Gently rub into scalp, leave in contact for approximately one hour. Wash out using warm water and mild shampoo. For severe scalp conditions, use daily for 3-7 days until improvement is obtained then intermittently as necessary. For less severe conditions such as dandruff use intermittently as necessary, e.g., once a week. If symptoms persist after 4 weeks consult your doctor. For children 6-12 years use under medical supervision only. Not recommended for use on children under six years.

Contraindications: Skin infections of the scalp or known sensitivity to any of the ingredients. Use in Pregnancy and Lactation: To be used at the discretion of the prescribing doctor. **Warnings and Precautions:** Instruct patients not to smoke or go near naked flames - risk of severe burns. Fabric (clothing, bedding, dressings etc) that has been in contact with this product burns more easily and is a serious fire hazard. Washing clothing and bedding may reduce product build-up but not totally remove it. Avoid contact with eyes, and any areas of broken skin. Coal tar may stain clothes and jewellery. Remove or protect these items during treatment. Side Effects: May cause skin irritation, folliculitis and rarely photosensitivity. In the event of such a reaction, discontinue use. Prescribers should consult the Summary of Product Characteristics in relation to other side effects.

Sebco™ Application Advice

It is important to advise patients on the application frequency and how to apply it. This also means advising on using the applicator on the tube.

- Usually, the hair is parted over the area of scale and the Sebco™ treatment applied along the affected area in a thin ribbon and gently massaged in.
- Contact with eyes should be avoided and hands washed afterwards.
- The treatment is left in place for one hour.
- Before washing out with warm water and shampoo, loosen the scale with fingers and comb out.
- This should be repeated daily depending on the degree of scale for up to seven days until it is under control.
- For maintenance, the Sebco™ combination treatment should be repeated as soon as signs of scale build up becomes apparent.
- The shampoo can be a medicated one or a mild shampoo of the patient's choice. Often patients have trialled various products and settled on one that suits their needs.
- In skin of colour the scalp is usually already very dry and frequent shampooing is not advisable as it further dries the scalp.
- For active treatment the same principles apply however for maintenance a once weekly shampoo may be sufficient.

"For maintenance, the Sebco™ combination treatment should be repeated as soon as signs of scale build up becomes apparent."

Some patients find it difficult to tolerate the combination treatment for longer periods of time and treatment outcome might be compromised. Under those circumstances any ointment can be applied to the affected areas in the same way and left for few hours or overnight under shower cap to soften scale. The combination treatment can still be used for up to one hour afterwards to benefit from the additional antiproliferative and anti-inflammatory effects.

References:

1. R. Grimalt. A Practical Guide to Scalp Disorders. Journal of Investigative Dermatology Symposium Proceedings (2007) 12, 10-14
2. Seborrheic eczema (pcds.org.uk)
3. Psoriasis: scalp psoriasis (pcds.org.uk)
4. Sebco™ - Scalp Ointment for Eczema, Dermatitis & Psoriasis (dermauk.co.uk)

Another trusted product from
dermauk.co.uk 

Pharmaceutical Precautions: Store below 25°C. Do not refrigerate. Replace the cap after use and return tube to carton. Discard tube no later than 4 weeks after opening. **Package Quantities:** 100g tube, 40g tube. **Basic NHS Price:** 40g £10.41, 100g £15.88. **Legal Category:** GSL. **Marketing Authorisation Number:** PL 19876/0001. Full prescribing information is available on request. **Marketing Authorisation Holder:** Derma UK Ltd, The Toffee Factory, Lower Steenbergs Yard, Ouseburn, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2DF, UK. "Sebco" and "Derma UK" are registered Trade Marks. **Date of Revision of Text:** January 2024.

Adverse events should be reported. Information about adverse event reporting can be found at www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard. Adverse events should also be reported to Derma UK Ltd, UK on 0191 375 9020.