

The 5 Most Common Scalp Problems

Wednesday, November 12, 2014, NewBeauty Editors

0 Comments | Post a comment

Recommend

299

Tweet

25

g+

1



A healthy scalp and healthy hair go hand in hand. When your scalp suffers from any of these common problems, it directly impacts your hair—it may not look as full, shiny or soft, or grow as quick or as thick as before.

1. Small white flakes

What it is: Dandruff (aka seborrheic dermatitis)

How it affects your hair: "Dandruff is a common condition that can be embarrassing. When it's severe, it can cause hair loss," says New York dermatologist Adebola Dele-Michael, MD ([treatments/doctor/delemichael/](#)). Dandruff occurs when the scalp becomes inflamed and causes yeast, which naturally lives on the scalp, to shed the top layer of skin, leading to flakes.

How to fix it: To treat dandruff, the inflammation and/or overgrowth of yeast needs to be suppressed, says Santa Clarita, CA dermatologist Bernard Raskin, MD ([treatments/doctor/Raskin/](#)). Yeast can be curbed by using prescription strength antifungal creams or pills, or anti-yeast shampoos; shampoos with salicylic acid, sulfur or cortisone creams help control inflammation.

Inside tip: "When using over-the-counter dandruff shampoo, the key is to lather and leave it on the scalp for three to five minutes before rinsing," says Houston dermatologist Jennifer M. Segal, MD ([treatments/doctor/segal/](#)).

2. A dry itchy scalp

What it is: A compromised barrier function of the scalp

How it affects your hair: "Chemicals in bleach, dyes, keratin treatments and hair relaxers can compromise the barrier function of the scalp," says Dr. Dele-Michael. Once the scalp is affected, moisture easily escapes, causing it to become inflamed, red, dry and itchy. If not properly treated, irritation could possibly cause hair to thin.

How to fix it: Celebrity stylist DJ Quintero of Serge Normant says to take care of your scalp and limit how often you wash your hair (every few days if you can) to let your natural oils rebuild, which will hydrate it. "Topical steroids can be used to reduce inflammation and restore the scalp's barrier function," says Dr. Dele-Michael.

3. Tingling, itching or burning after color

What it is: An allergy to chemicals in hair color

How it affects your hair: Anything that causes a reaction on the scalp can make styling difficult—heat, brushing and products can instigate even more discomfort. "Hair color can damage the scalp by causing an allergic reaction or by irritating it directly, almost like a chemical burn," says Dr. Segal.

How to fix it: In this situation, staying away from color is your best bet, if you can. If you can't bypass coloring your hair, Quintero says to ask your colorist to use ammonia-free color products. "Sweet'N Low can also be mixed into the color formula, which helps to neutralize some of the ammonia and minimize irritation." A mild steroid can be prescribed to take down inflammation.

4. A red, scaly scalp with crusty patches

What it is: Psoriasis

How it affects your hair: Psoriasis can cause thinning and hair loss, if it transpires at the hairline and is severe. When psoriasis occurs on the scalp, it often leaves a thick, noticeable scale of skin. "With psoriasis, the body is signaled to make way too many skin cells too fast. But, the difference is that these skin cells are still living, so if you pick at them they will bleed in the scalp and hairline," says Dr. Raskin.

How to fix it: Psoriasis results in excess cells in localized areas, which appear as red plaques that are hard to disguise. "The best treatments are medications that reduce the cell production system. I like to prescribe cortisone, vitamin D creams and Retin-A, since they normalize how much skin is made," says Dr. Raskin. Make sure to use a mild exfoliating shampoo a few times per week, too.

5. A greasy, almost slick coating

What it is: An overly oily scalp

How it affects your hair: While oil is necessary for healthy hair—it keeps the scalp moisturized and gives a layer of defense against infection—too much of it can result in limp strands that also may be nearly impossible to style.

How to fix it: Stylist Giovanna Lampo of the Fekkai Salon in Greenwich, CT says that an easy way to combat an overactive scalp that produces too much oil is by shampooing regularly. "Always use a gentle shampoo so you're not exposing your scalp to a harsh cleanser." If regular washing doesn't cut it, talk to your doctor and get tested to see if a hormone irregularity could be the cause.

Related Posts:

11 Scalp Savers ([slideshow/1459-11-scalp-savers/](#))

3 Surprising Causes of Scalp Problems ([hottopic/blogpost/8186-3-surprising-causes-of-scalp-problems/](#))

Is Your Daily Routine Ruining Your Hair? ([blog/dailybeauty/7974-is-your-daily-routine-ruining-your-hair/](#))

A Surprising Way to Stop Scalp Irritation Caused by Hair Dye ([blog/dailybeauty/5998-a-surprising-way-to-stop-scalp-irritation-caused-by-hair-dye/](#))

Next Blogpost ([hottopic/blogpost/8517-how-to-get-rid-of-acne-scars/](#)) ▶

Tags: Adebola Dele-Michael, Md ([/blog/tag/adebola-dele-michael-md/](#)) • Bernard Raskin, Md ([/blog/tag/bernard-raskin-md/](#)) • Dry Scalp ([/blog/hair/dry-scalp/](#)) • Hair ([/blog/hair/](#)) • Insider Tip ([/blog/insider-tip/](#)) • Jennifer M. Segal, Md ([/blog/tag/jennifer-m-segal-md/](#)) • Burning Scalp ([/blog/tag/burning-scalp/](#)) • Dandruff ([/blog/tag/dandruff/](#)) • Dry Scalp ([/blog/tag/dry-scalp/](#)) • Itchy Scalp ([/blog/tag/itchy-scalp/](#)) • Oily Scalp ([/blog/tag/oily-scalp/](#)) • Psoriasis ([/blog/tag/psoriasis/](#)) • Scalp ([/blog/tag/scalp/](#))