

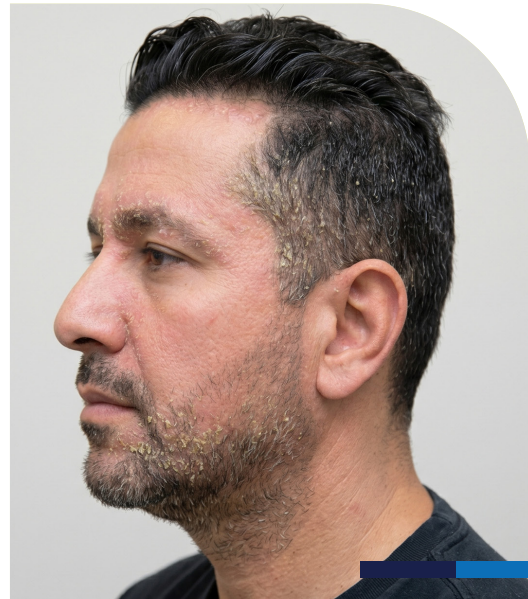
learn about seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff)

By

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1. What is seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff) and how does it manifest?

It is a chronic, recurrent, and generally mild form of skin inflammation, affecting areas with higher oil production: the scalp, eyebrows, ears, face, and central part of the chest.

"Dandruff" is one of the milder manifestations of this condition.

It can be identified by some easy-to-notice skin signs, such as: slightly raised areas, which may have redness or yellow or white flaking, that usually sheds easily. Other symptoms may include itching or burning.

It has an intermittent behavior; at some times in life, more manifestations may be present,

while at other times these are milder and even almost imperceptible.

2. Who can get seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff)?

It can appear at various times in life:

From birth up to two years of age. In babies, it is temporary and disappears over time. In adults, it is more frequent between 20 and 60 years of age, affecting men more than women.

There are factors that increase the likelihood of developing this condition, which include: oily skin, hormonal changes, stress, chronic diseases, and the use of products that can irritate the skin and scalp.

3. How frequent is dandruff, what is its cause, and how is it cured?

Dandruff is quite frequent. It affects 2 to 4% of the world's population.

Its exact cause is unknown. However, it may be related to excessive oil production on the skin, the presence of fungi that inhabit normal skin, stress, or hormonal changes. Together, all these factors can favor the appearance of seborrheic dermatitis.

Dandruff has no cure, but it can generally be controlled with special shampoos and creams, gentle and regular skin cleansing, guided by a doctor.

It is important to remember that it is not contagious nor is it caused by poor hygiene.

4. When to consult a doctor?

Once the mentioned signs and symptoms begin (see question 1), it is important to consult a doctor, as it can worsen to the point of affecting the quality of life.

5. How is seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff) diagnosed?

The doctor relies on the signs and symptoms presented by the patient (see question 1). No additional tests are required for diagnosis.

The patient may have other coexisting skin conditions that must be treated and managed simultaneously.

6. How is seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff) treated?

In babies, body oils or moisturizers may be used, with medical recommendations. Wash the hair daily with a gentle, non-medicated baby shampoo.

Adults require long-term management with different medications in the form of shampoos, lotions, or creams, which will be recommended by their doctor.

Note: Long-term self-medication can generate unwanted effects on the skin. We invite you to always consult with a doctor.

7. Is it possible to prevent seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff)?

It is not possible to prevent dandruff, as it was mentioned previously that it does not have a single cause and is a condition of the scalp skin that can appear at any time in life.



Recommended readings

- Bologna, J.L., Schaffer, J. V., & Cerroni, L. (2025). Dermatology (Elsevier, ed;5thedition). Elsevier.
- Sasseville, D., & Houle, M.-C. (2025, February). Seborrheic dermatitis in adolescents and adults. UpToDate. bit.ly/4kW4PYW

