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WHAT TO DO ABOUT DANDRUFF

Dry white flakes on your clothes and an itchy scalp add up to a common, embarrassing condition. But it can be banished, as our expert reveals

The skin of the scalp is no different to anywhere else on the body. It goes through the same natural process of skin renewal in which dead cells are shed to be replaced by new skin cells.

However, sometimes this process is speeded up, producing huge amounts of dead skin cells. On the scalp, this causes dandruff and those unsightly white flakes on your shoulders.

Almost half of all adults will find they get dandruff at some point. Depending on the cause of the flakes, it's slightly more common in men and young people who

have oilier skin. Those affected can have long periods of remission which are broken by occasional flare-ups.

Why do we get it?

'There are two main causes,' explains trichologist Sara Allison. 'The most common is seborrhoeic dermatitis, which causes oily skin and affects around four per cent of the population.'

This form of dermatitis affects greasy (sebaceous) skin areas, such as the face and chest,

as well as the scalp.

'Some people react to a harmless yeast called



Hair Today More Tomorrow Sensitive Scalp Dandruff Shampoo

DID YOU KNOW?

Babies get a short-lived form of seborrhoeic dermatitis in the first two months that causes cradle cap. It usually clears up after a few months.

Recommended:

- Hair Today More Tomorrow, Multi & Omegas.
- Either her Sensitive Scalp Dandruff Shampoo or Extra Strength Dandruff Shampoo, from hairtodaymoretomorrow.com

Malassezia that lives on the skin, in the sebum. This leads to an overgrowth of the yeast and more dead skin cells.'

The other main cause is the autoimmune condition psoriasis, which typically starts in the 30s and continues throughout life. It affects around two per cent of the population.

'Psoriasis causes thick patches of dry, flaky skin, which can be itchy,' says Allison. 'The condition creates a much faster turnover of skin cells, up to four times the normal rate. And it can occur on other parts of the body, too.'

'Stress, certain medications (such as beta-blockers or anti-inflammatory painkillers) and sensitivity to products can also lead to flare-ups. I also find food intolerances, mainly to casein (in dairy) and gluten, are a factor with

some people. 'It is very individual and I even discovered that a sensitivity to strawberries was the cause of chronic dandruff for one of my patients.'

The treatments

Conventional approaches tend to be topical steroids for psoriasis (either in a lotion or creams), followed by dedicated anti-dandruff shampoos. 'The most common shampoo is coal tar,' says Allison. 'Although it's effective, it can be rather harsh.'

'I've found that shampoos containing piroctone olamine are

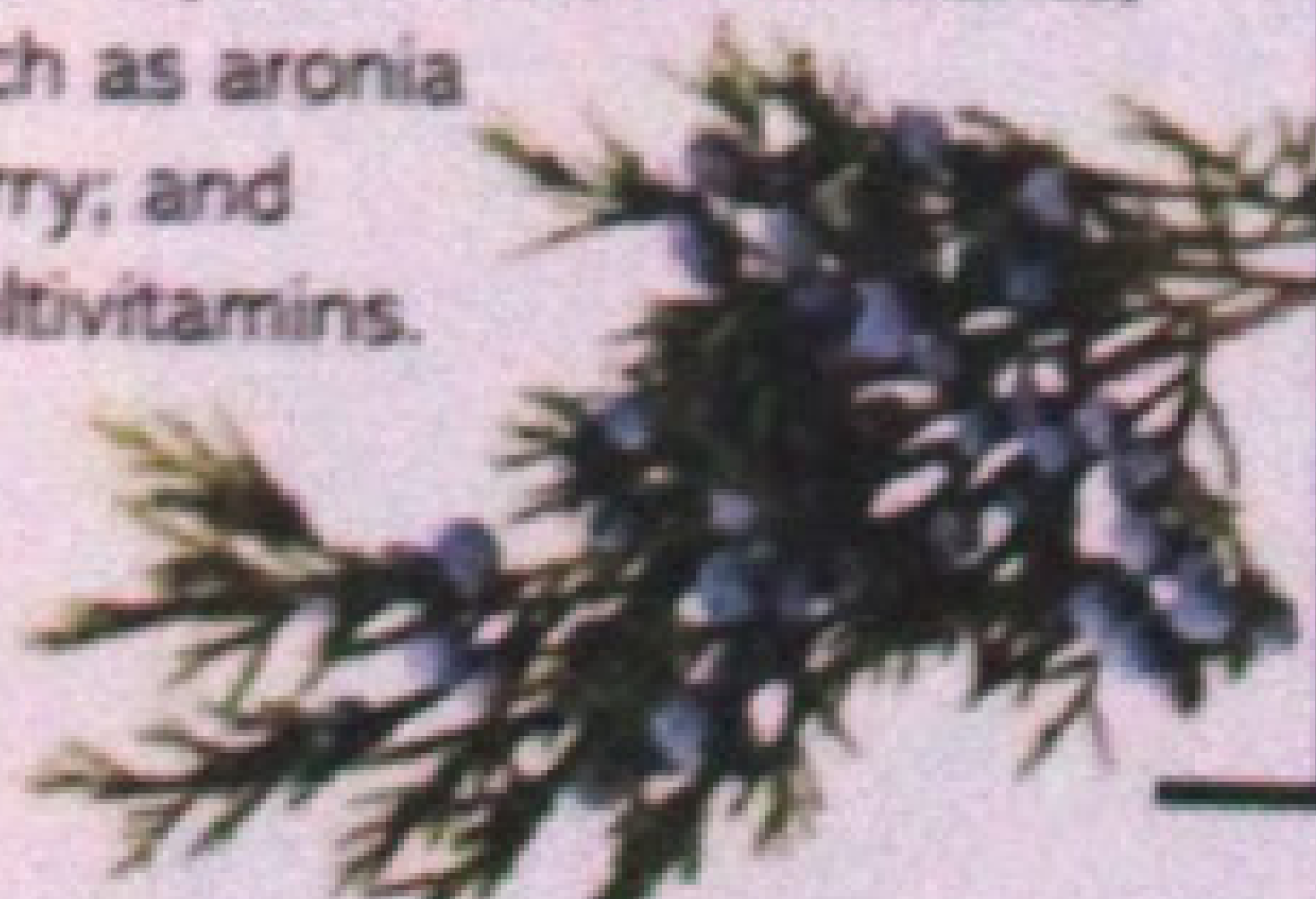
extremely effective in getting rid of itchy, scaly skin cells. Whichever one you choose, make sure it's SLS (sodium lauryl sulphate) free.'

When shampooing your hair, try not to scratch the skin. Instead, gently massage the scalp to avoid damaging the skin – and hair.

What about conditioner? 'People often think they shouldn't use one, but it's very important to moisturise the scalp, particularly with psoriasis,' advises Allison. 'Even those with seborrhoeic dermatitis should use conditioner daily,' says Allison, 'as it's important to build up a protective layer on the scalp. Use a lighter conditioner and make sure you apply it to the scalp as well as the ends of the hair.'

→ 3 NATURAL HEALTHY HAIR HELPERS

- 1 Thyme and rosemary essential oils* to tackle itching and flakiness.
- 2 Juniper essential oil is an excellent exfoliator and is similar to coal tar, but less harsh.
- 3 Try a multi-combination supplement, preferably one containing co-Q10; omega-3, -6 and -7; probiotics; antioxidants, such as aronia berry; and multivitamins.



SARA ALLISON

is a trichologist with a clinic in Harley Street, London (hairtodaymoretomorrow.com). She is also the author of *Hair Today More Tomorrow: How To Keep Your Hair On...The Ultimate Guide For Women* (£12.97 paperback, £9.97 Kindle; both available online)