

SEBORRHEIC DERMATITIS

Seborrheic dermatitis is a common, harmless, scaling rash that sometimes itches. Dandruff is seborrheic dermatitis of the scalp. Seborrheic dermatitis may also occur on the eyebrows, eyelid edges, ears, the skin near the nose, and such skin-fold areas as the armpits and groin. Sometimes seborrheic dermatitis produces round, scaling patches on the middle of the chest.

Seborrheic dermatitis results from skin not growing properly. The exact cause is not known. Seborrheic dermatitis is *not* related to diet and is *not* contagious. Nervous stress and any physical illness tend to worsen seborrheic dermatitis, but do not cause it.

Seborrheic dermatitis may appear at any age, either gradually or suddenly. It tends to run in families. Seborrheic dermatitis may last for many years and may disappear by itself. Often it gets better or worse without any apparent reason.

There is no cure for seborrheic dermatitis. However, it is possible to keep this nuisance under control. The treatment of seborrheic dermatitis depends on what part of the body is involved.

Dandruff, seborrheic dermatitis of the scalp, can usually be controlled by washing your hair often with medicated shampoos. Sometimes it is also necessary to use solutions or gels containing tar or cortisone. It is best to use the solution to the scalp at night before bed and to wash with the medicated shampoo on the following morning. Remember that dandruff is a harmless nuisance. It does *not* cause hair loss.

In areas of smooth skin such as the face and ears, cortisone-containing creams, lotions, or ointments are effective. Cortisones applied to limited areas of the skin do not affect your general health.

Once seborrheic dermatitis is under control, gradually use your medicines less and less. It may even be possible to stop the medicines completely, but occasional treatment is usually needed. Seborrheic dermatitis has a way of returning. If it does, resume the original treatment. The goal is to control the problem with the least amount of therapy as necessary.