

Get ahead



Claire Moulds and
Dermatology Nurse
Adviser **Julie Van Onselen**
address the headache of
washing your hair.

.....

It's supposed to be your crowning glory but for those with eczema the 'simple' task of washing your hair can prove to be a minefield. This is reflected in the many calls and emails we receive on this topic to our helpline, so for this edition of *Exchange* we asked our followers on Facebook who have atopic eczema to give us some ideas on what works for them.

While most of this article is about atopic eczema, we have also included some product suggestions for those with seborrhoeic eczema (or dermatitis as it's often called) in the Box on page 35. For babies who have cradle cap – also known as infantile seborrhoeic dermatitis (or eczema) – the best approach is to avoid shampoo altogether and simply rinse the scalp with tepid water, or tepid water with an emollient – either a bath oil (diluted) or a leave-on emollient.

How and when

Logistically, washing your hair when you have eczema is a complicated business. Needless to say, it's not advisable to wash it in the bath or shower as any product used will then come into contact with other areas of exposed skin and potentially cause irritation or a reaction.

Instead, lean over the basin or bath so that both the suds and water used for rinsing go straight down the plughole. Although tricky, try to avoid

lather and water coming into contact with your face and the back of your neck. A towelling headband or scarf tied around your head can provide additional protection in this instance.

Remember that prolonged contact with shampoo and water may irritate your hands or cause hand eczema to flare, so always wear gloves to wash hair. You can find a selection of suitable products, including liners, detailed in our 'Gloves: hands-on support' article in the December 2016 issue of *Exchange*.

As ever with products that come into contact with atopic skin, the way you use them can have almost as much impact as what you use so, when shampooing your hair or your children's hair, use as little shampoo as possible and rinse well. Plain water can wash hair surprisingly effectively. Diluted emollient bath oil or cream also work but can leave some hair greasy. A mix-and-match approach – occasional shampoo combined with either plain water or diluted emollient bath oil or cream – can be effective.

How you wash your hair is only part of the challenge though. The frequency with which you do it is also a factor. It goes without saying that you shouldn't wash your hair or your children's hair any more than you have to as the combined impact of exposure to chemicals and water and – if used – the drying effects of hairdryers and heated styling tools, will be

extremely detrimental to your skin. The skin on our scalp is just as prone to eczema as the skin on the rest of our body. In the case of babies, it's really important not to use shampoo. When a hair wash is required, simply sluice the hair with water and emollient bath oil. At any age try to minimise how often you wash your hair or your children's hair, how often you use shampoo and how much shampoo you use.

During puberty and post-puberty, hormonal changes will mean that the scalp secretes more oil. In addition, teenagers are naturally more cosmetically aware. As a result, the use of shampoo and frequency of washing will become more of an issue and a 'happy medium' may need to be negotiated. For example, if their skin is very dry, hair washing might need to be balanced out with the application of scalp emollient overnight to counter the effects.

Avoid getting in a lather

As with all products, what suits one person with eczema may not suit another, so there is no quick and easy solution when confronted by a shop shelf groaning with different brands. Of course, the reality is that all shampoos contain some sort of soap or detergent, albeit some harsher than others. Hence there is a risk factor associated with using them when you suffer from atopic eczema, and it's very important to use as little as possible and to rinse well.

However, there are things that you can look out for when shortlisting products to trial:

- Avoid products that contain sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS) as this has been shown to damage the skin barrier in people with atopic eczema.
- Don't automatically assume that 'baby products' will be gentler on your skin. Some are okay to use but they are not universally 'gentle'.
- Try to avoid products that are fragranced and bear in mind that 'natural' fragrances

and essential oils can be as much an irritant as synthetic ones. That said, many of the products suggested by our Facebook followers are in fact fragranced.

- Avoid products that contain olive oil as recent research has demonstrated that it is damaging to the skin barrier, which is already fragile in those with atopic eczema.
- Many shampoos contain tree nut oils, particularly almond or argan. Given the association between atopic eczema and food allergy – and especially the evidence now showing that the atopic eczema can lead to the food allergy, rather than vice versa – it is a good idea to keep products containing nut oil away from the skin of babies and toddlers with atopic eczema, even if no tree nut allergy is present or suspected.
- Given the increased risk of contact allergy, it's important to avoid products that list the following in their ingredients: methylisothiazolinone (a common preservative also going by the abbreviation of MI (see the September issue of *Exchange* for an in-depth examination of this topic), limonene and linalool. Obviously, if you have been patch tested as contact allergic to given ingredients, you need to scour ingredients lists to avoid these as well.
- Some people with atopic eczema on their scalps find some of the tar-based medicated shampoos – e.g. T-gel and Capasal, used to manage seborrhoeic dermatitis (see Box) – useful, especially if used occasionally.
- Make sure that any product you buy has a full ingredients list. If in any doubt, or if you have any queries, contact the Careline listed on the packaging, check the manufacturer's website or ask the retail outlet itself. Boots can be especially helpful in this instance. Also remember that formulations do change from time to time, so check the ingredients list every single time you make a purchase, even if you have successfully used a product in the past.

Product highlights

We were delighted to hear from our Facebook users about which products they had found the most helpful. While they may or may not all prove to be a good match for your skin, having a shortlist helps to reduce the amount of experimentation, and expense.

Recommended by
Facebook users



UNFRAGRANCED SHAMPOOS



E45 DRY SCALP

www.boots.com/en/E45-Dermatological-Dry-Scalp-Shampoo-200ml_867585/

ELAVE

www.expresschemist.co.uk/elave-absolute-purity-sensitive-shampoo-250ml.html#.
WIoTH1OLTIU

GREEN PEOPLE NEUTRAL SCENT FREE

www.greenpeople.co.uk/shop/by-product/organic-hair-care/organic-shampoo-products/neutral-scent-free-shampoo-200ml

EUCERIN DERMO CAPILLAIRE

www.eucerin.co.uk/products/dermocapillaire/calming-urea-shampoo

OILATUM DAILY JUNIOR (ideally not to be used daily though, despite its name)

www.boots.com/en/Oilatium-Daily-Junior-Shampoo-200ml_1534324/

PHILIP KINGSLEY NO SCENT NO COLOUR SHAMPOO

www.philipkingsley.co.uk/concern/no-scent-no-colour-for-sensitive-hair-and-scalps/philip-kingsley-no-scent-no-colour-shampoo.html

A'KIN www.healthy-house.co.uk/a-kin-unscented-shampoo

PURE NUFF STUFF www.purenuffstuff.co.uk/products/Hair-Cleansers-Unscented?cat=63

FRAGRANCED SHAMPOOS



PALMERS COCONUT OIL CONDITIONING SHAMPOO

<https://uk.palmers.com/coconut-oil-formula/118-conditioning-shampoo.html>

MOO GOO SHAMPOO

<http://moogooskincare.co.uk/milk-shampoo.html>

BODY SHOP GINGER ANTI-DANDRUFF SHAMPOO

www.thebodyshop.com/en-gb/hair/shampoo/ginger-anti-dandruff-scalp-care/p/p000120

DEAD SEA SPA MAGIK SHAMPOO

www.hollandandbarrett.com/shop/product/dead-sea-spa-magik-mineral-shampoo-60031076

SIMPLE KIND TO HAIR GENTLE CARE SHAMPOO

www.simple.co.uk/our-products/product/kind-to-hair-gentle-care-shampoo.html

AVALON ORGANICS NOURISHING LAVENDER SHAMPOO

www.avalonorganics.com/en/products/hair-care/shampoo/nourishing-lavender-shampoo

LAVERA NEUTRAL NATURAL SHOWER SHAMPOO

www.thereustbeabetterway.co.uk/lavera-neutral-natural-shower-shampoo.html#product_tabs_description_tabbed

ALBERTO BALSAM TEA TREE SHAMPOO

www.boots.com/alberto-balsam-tea-tree-tingle-shampoo-350ml-10210304

ALLERGENICS SHAMPOO

www.hollandandbarrett.com/shop/product/allergenics-hair-gentle-medicated-shampoo-60087773

FREE FROM
SLS, OLIVE
AND NUT OIL,
MI, LIMONENE
AND LINALOOL

Of course, things do change and – while the information above was correct at the time of going to print – do check the label or contact the manufacturer directly to be sure about ingredients.

Smooth operator

Unfortunately, nobody has yet found a selection of conditioners that are suitable for those with eczema to use. This isn't a complete surprise given that the very nature of the product is to 'stick' to the hair to keep it smooth and shiny.

Alternative suggestions that you may want to consider in place of a conditioner are diluted cider vinegar – for shine – or lightly sprayed-on unperfumed mineral oil heavily diluted in warm water, which can be left on the hair to help prevent tangles and knots.

SEBORRHOEIC DERMATITIS OF THE SCALP

Seborrhoeic dermatitis can range from mild flaking of the skin (dandruff) to red and scaly areas all over the surface, which can sometimes weep. Although it affects the areas of the skin with grease glands and can develop a greasy-looking scale, greasy skin is not the cause of seborrhoeic dermatitis. Typically, as in all forms of eczema, the skin is in fact quite dry and can be aggravated by exposure to detergents, shampoos and soaps.

The condition is believed to be an inflammatory reaction related to an overgrowth of normal skin inhabitants – species of *Malassezia* yeasts. Although these yeasts are part of normal skin flora, for an unknown reason in certain individuals they trigger seborrhoeic dermatitis. Once an individual has become allergic to *Malassezia* on the skin, exposure to it will always cause a problem. However, it can be controlled using anti-yeast treatments, which will reduce the *Malassezia*.

Milder cases can often be managed by using a medicated anti-yeast shampoo and, even if all signs of the condition have disappeared, a 'maintenance' application should be applied every few weeks.

There are many over-the-counter **ANTI-YEAST SHAMPOOS**, including:

DANDRAZOL (ketoconazole)

NIZORAL (ketoconazole)
also available on prescription

SELSUN be aware that the selenium can stain cheap metals and jewellery black

The above shampoos should be used as a treatment, rather than as a hair wash, and left on for 5–10 minutes before rinsing. Ideally, they should be used no more than twice a week as there is a risk of irritation, but long-term use is advised to keep reducing the yeast population, which in turn will improve symptoms.

For more severe cases of seborrhoeic dermatitis affecting the scalp, a scalp application or lotion containing a steroid and salicylic acid (e.g. **DIPROSALIC SCALP APPLICATION**) may be prescribed. Tar-based shampoos or **DERMAX** (not tar-based) are good for keeping symptoms of flaking and scaling at bay and can be alternated with an anti-yeast shampoo.

TAR-BASED SHAMPOOS include:

T-GEL

CAPASAL (which also contains a de-scaling agent)