

Natural treatments for dandruff

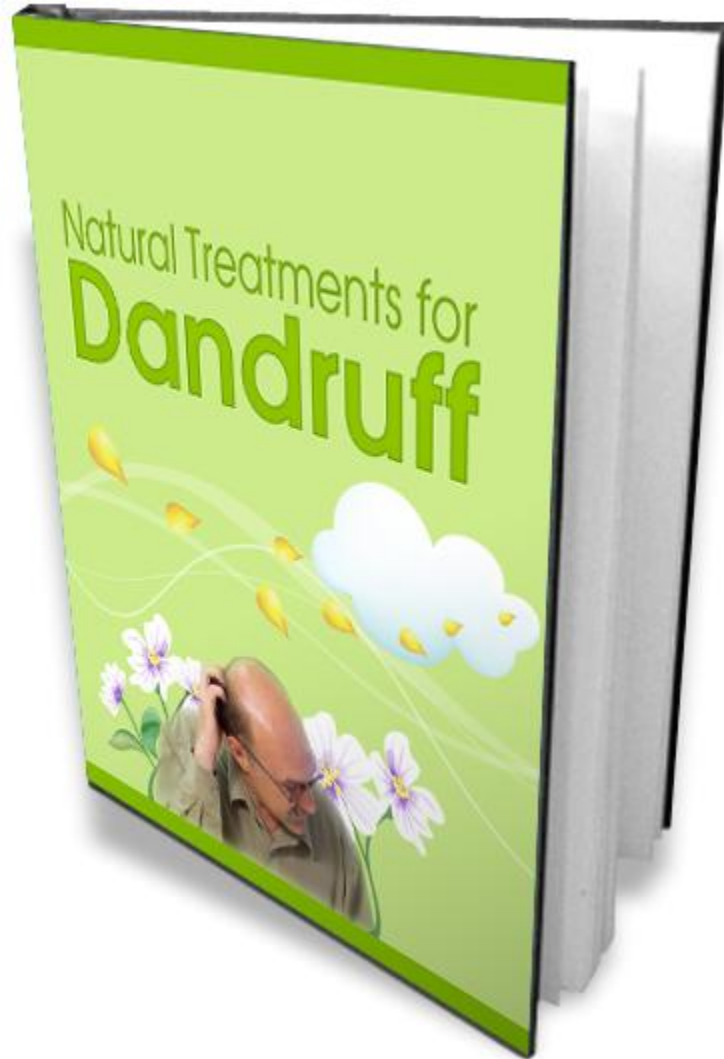


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Introduction

As anyone who has ever suffered from dandruff will tell you, it can be a big problem that non-sufferers often don't really understand. And what is not understood by the majority is that whilst the condition is not necessarily dangerous in health terms, it is definitely harmful to the sufferer in many other ways.

Thus it is logical that most dandruff sufferers will do whatever they can to get rid of their problem, and in most cases, this is likely to mean turning to commercially produced anti-dandruff products to deal with the problem.

The good news is that there are plenty of such products on the market and many of them can be bought across the counter from a standard drug store or pharmacy. The bad news is that many of these commercially produced anti-dandruff solutions are chemically based, and as with all products that rely on chemicals for their positive effects, there are often potential negative side-effects to take into account before using them.

Hence it makes a great deal of sense to consider natural solutions if you suffer from dandruff, and fortunately, there are quite a number of natural answers to the dandruff question.

The primary purpose of this book is to examine many of these natural treatments or cures for dandruff. However, before doing so, we will first examine exactly what dandruff is, why people suffer from the problem and the solutions that most people use to deal with the problem.

What is dandruff?

Dandruff is a problem that is familiar to many millions of people all over the world, with Procter & Gamble (who manufacture one of the best known commercially produced anti-dandruff shampoos) suggesting on their website that perhaps 60% of US citizens will suffer from dandruff at one time in their life or another.

The basic cause of dandruff is the shedding of dead skin cells from the scalp, which is in fact a process that takes place all of the time for every person. However, the difference between the shedding of dead skin cells for a non-dandruff sufferer and for someone who has the condition is a question of degree.

In the normal course of events for someone who does not suffer dandruff, the life cycle of average skin cells is somewhere around 28 days. During this period of time, the skin cells are formed within the body before being gradually pushed to the outermost epidermal layer of the skin. Once the cells reach the very outer layer of the skin, in contact with the air, they quickly die and are shed by the body.

However, because these dead cells are infinitesimally small, invisible to the naked eye, and because the number of cells being shed is 'normal', the process is unnoticeable.

On the other hand, in the case of someone who suffers dandruff, the situation is significantly different. In this case, the individual concerned is producing far too many skin cells, with the whole cell production process taking place in something between two and seven days. The result is that these cells are shed in oily clumps or as flakes, hence this person has dandruff.

In effect, someone who suffers from dandruff is simply showing the visible signs of an exaggerated physiological process, with their body working too quickly to process the job that for a non-dandruff sufferer is something that they will not even notice.

However, the shedding of oily clumps or flakes of skin is often accompanied by redness and irritation as well, so not only does dandruff look unpleasant to other people, it can also be an unpleasant problem for the sufferer too.

Contrary to popular theory, dandruff does not necessarily imply that your head or your hair is dirty, nor is the condition contagious.

As a physiological process, dandruff can never be completely cured, only treated. Consequently, anything that claims to be able to

cure dandruff is something to be viewed with a good deal of skepticism and doubt.

Dandruff is a condition that can be suffered in varying degrees, ranging from extremely mild to severe.

In most cases, there is no need to consult the medical profession to deal with a dandruff problem unless it is extreme or serious, or because it is related to some other condition which does necessitate medical attention.

Is dandruff the only cause of visibly flaky scalp?

Most people have met someone who suffers from dandruff if they do not suffer from the condition themselves. At some time or another, we have all encountered someone with the tell-tale white flakes in their hair and on their shoulders, so most of us are familiar with what dandruff looks like.

However, the white lumps or flakes on the shoulders of someone wearing dark clothing do not necessarily indicate a person who suffers from dandruff, because there are other conditions that can cause the skin on the scalp to flake in a similar way.

Some of these conditions might require medical attention or special treatment, so you cannot automatically assume that flaky skin landing on your shoulders immediately tells you that you have dandruff (although as dandruff would be by far the most common cause of flaky skin, it would be the most likely cause).

Learning to recognize these other conditions is a valuable exercise as it should enable you to differentiate between dandruff and something else that might be (or may become) more serious and worthy of medical attention.

Seborrhoeic dermatitis

Seborrhoeic dermatitis (sometimes called 'Seborrheic eczema') is a skin disorder that can affect not only the scalp but also other areas of the body including the face and trunk. This is a condition that causes flaking, itchy red skin and is most commonly found in areas of the body where there is the largest number of sebaceous glands.

As these glands are found in hair follicles, it follows that any part of the body where there is hair present is a place where you might suffer from Seborrhoeic dermatitis.

Fortunately, whilst the condition might be visually unpleasant and often causes irritating itching, it is nevertheless harmless. Whilst it is also a condition that can be persistent, it is one that is easily dealt with using either natural means in the majority of cases, or medication if absolutely necessary in the most severe cases.

Scalp psoriasis

In the case of people who suffer from psoriasis, one area of the body that is often affected is the scalp. As the most common form of psoriasis (psoriasis vulgaris) is characterized by angry red lesions on the skin with a silvery, flaky upper skin layer, scalp psoriasis will usually

cause dead skin flakes to land on your clothes in exactly the same way as dandruff would.

Psoriasis is a medical condition that can vary in degree and severity, with the most severe cases sometimes requiring medical intervention.

And whilst there are different types of psoriasis, it is a fact that 80% of people who suffer from the condition have psoriasis vulgaris, which would be evident in most sufferers by the angry red lesions or plaques that can appear almost anywhere on the body.

However, the most common place to encounter psoriasis lesions is on the elbows and knees, so if you have skin flakes dropping down from your head as well as these lesions, it is likely that your scalp problem is associated with psoriasis rather than with dandruff. In this case, seek medical advice to confirm your condition.

Fungal infection

Every person has millions of fungus cells on every part of their body, but for the majority, these fungi cause no problem whatsoever. However, if the skin is damaged in some way, the fungus on the surface can gain access to the body, in which case it is possible that it might cause a fungal infection.

This can happen on any part of the body, including the scalp, so it is entirely possible that from time to time you might suffer a fungal infection that causes the skin cells around the infected area to die in greater numbers than usual. When this happens, you would encounter dandruff-like symptoms as the dead skin cells are shed.

Whether you need to seek medical attention in these circumstances would depend upon the severity of the fungal infection from which you are suffering. However, in the case of fungal infection, it should be evident that something is not quite right because it is most likely to be accompanied by a degree of pain, which dandruff very rarely is.

Head lice

Although it is perhaps not that easy to believe in this day and age, there are still millions of people (mainly children) all over the world who suffer from [head lice](#). For example, it is believed that anywhere from 6 to 12 million people are treated for head lice in the USA alone every year, whilst high levels of louse infestation have been reported in countries as diverse as the UK, Australia, Israel, Denmark and Sweden.

And in the case of louse infestation, it is possible that the excoriation (or shedding) of skin cells caused by the lice as they go about their 'business' might cause a condition that appears to be similar to dandruff.

Obviously, having lice is not particularly pleasant, nor is it necessarily healthy as they will bite the host skin four or five times a day to feed and inject saliva into the skin when they do so.

Although head lice are not believed to be carriers of any disease, they are certainly something that you want to get rid of as soon as possible, so if there is any reason to suspect an infestation, you should seek attention as soon as possible.

What causes dandruff?

Although the problem of dandruff is probably one that has affected mankind almost since the dawn of time, it is nevertheless a problem that is not completely and fully understood as yet.

Hence it is difficult if not impossible to give a complete definition of what causes dandruff. On the other hand, there are many factors that appear to be implicated in causing the condition, some of which are internal others that are directly related to the scalp itself.

Firstly, there are suggestions that part of the reason that some people suffer dandruff could be genetic. Part of the reason for believing this is that dandruff generally starts to appear after puberty, and is also far more common in men than it is in women. It is also another oddity about dandruff that it appears to be more common in people who suffer from certain diseases, such as Parkinson's disease, which researchers suggest might also have some genetic causes as well.

Some 25 years ago, dermatologists began to suspect that one of the major causes of dandruff is a naturally occurring yeast that everyone carries on their skin known as [Malassezia yeast](#).

Nowadays, it is generally agreed that it is a combination of this particular form of yeast and the sebum secreted by the sebaceous glands in the hair upon which this particular yeast feeds that is the primary cause of dandruff in an individual who is already genetically predisposed to suffering from the condition.

When the yeast feeds on the natural grease produced by the human skin, it generates oleic acid which then penetrates the stratum corneum (the outermost layer of the skin) and causes irregularities in the way the skin cells divide, accelerating the growth of new cells by doing so.

As suggested, it is this increased turnover or rapid production of skin cells that causes dandruff, hence removing Malassezia yeast from the skin should help to reduce or remove your dandruff problem.

Some dandruff truths and misconceptions...

Does dry skin cause dandruff?

It is a very common belief that dry skin and dandruff go together, but in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. As suggested in the previous chapter, without sebum, the *Malassezia* yeast has nothing to feed on and therefore the whole 'chain' of dandruff production is irrevocably broken without oily skin.

Dandruff is a result of poor hygiene.

It is unlikely that poor hygiene has anything to do with causing dandruff despite the fact that the probable main cause of the condition is yeast on the skin which feeds on the oil secreted by the sebaceous glands.

However, it appears that people who suffer dandruff do not necessarily have more yeast on their skin, although they may at certain times of their life (i.e. around puberty) produced more natural oil. In fact, rather than having more yeast on their skin, it is likely that people who suffer dandruff simply more sensitive to the yeast.

Sunlight and headgear

It is probably true that exposing your head to the sunlight may inhibit the growth of *Malassezia* yeast which like all other yeasts thrives in darker, damp conditions.

Think about the kind of places where you would expect fungi (yeast is a fungus) like mushrooms to grow, and you will quickly have a fairly accurate picture of the kind of conditions in which *Malassezia* yeast is happiest. And I have no doubt that the picture in your mind is not one of mushrooms shooting up in bright, warm sunlight!

It is for this reason that many people suspect (perhaps correctly) that wearing a hat or a bonnet might create an ideal environment for dandruff to develop, because enclosing your head in this way could create an environment that is far more like that which *Malassezia* yeast will thrive in.

For this reason, if you are a dandruff sufferer, one of the first things that you can do is to expose your head to the sunlight as often as you possibly can. In the same vein, you should avoid wearing headgear whenever possible as well.

Many sufferers find that their dandruff is seasonal, being considerably worse in the cold and damp of the fall (autumn) and winter than it is in spring and summer.

Of course, if you live in a place where sunlight is generally at a premium, there is perhaps not a great deal you can do, but you should

nevertheless be aware that exposing your head to the sun is one way of naturally combating dandruff.

You can contract dandruff from a dirty hairbrush.

Although it may not be particularly pleasant to use someone else's hair brush or comb if they are a dandruff sufferer, it is not true that you can develop dandruff yourself from doing so. Unlike head lice (as an example), dandruff cannot be passed from one person to another in any way as it is entirely non-contagious, so sharing a brush or borrowing someone else's hat is not going to increase the possibility of you developing a dandruff problem.

Stress and diet

There is evidence that stress can play a part in causing dandruff or in making a pre-existing dandruff problem worse. Why this should be the case is not particularly clear, although it may be that your body speeds up the skin cell production process at times of stress and anxiety when it is more excited.

There may also be a connection with the fact that stress and anxiety might prompt quicker sebum production as it is natural to sweat more at times when anxiety or stress is greater.

In a similar manner, if your diet contains too much sugar, fat, or starch, this could exacerbate your dandruff problem, as can a diet that is generally low in healthy nutrition.

It is sometimes suggested that a dandruff sufferer should avoid eating hot spicy food (which causes sweating in many people) and that alcohol should also be avoided as it is believed that the toxic nature of alcohol in the body might aggravate the problem.

Non-natural dandruff treatments analyzed

Perhaps not surprisingly, the number one objective of anyone who suffers from dandruff will almost inevitably be to do whatever is necessary to bring their condition under control. In fact, in my own experience of family members who have suffered from dandruff, they have tried almost every possible solution they have come across for the condition, including quite a few that (in truth) sounded extremely unlikely to work, if not a bit crazy!

Amongst the solutions that I would guess almost every dandruff sufferer has tried or will try are medicated shampoos, shampoos which include chemicals which are supposed to control dandruff.

There are many different dandruff control shampoos on the market, many of which can be bought over the counter in pharmacies or from drug stores. The active ingredients of these shampoos not surprisingly varies from one brand to another, with some being based on relatively natural substances whilst others are chemical based.

Before considering how you can treat your dandruff problem entirely naturally, it makes sense to consider these chemical-based shampoos in order to establish whether there are any possible adverse side-effects.

In the majority of cases, the idea of including chemicals in an anti-dandruff shampoo is that the chemicals used are antimicrobial or antifungal so that they reduce or prevent dandruff by inhibiting the growth of the necessary yeast that is a root cause of dandruff.

There are several different chemicals used in the different brands, with the most common being selenium sulfide, pyrithione zinc and ketoconazole.

For the majority of people, because these chemicals are contained in relatively small amounts in medicated shampoos, the risk of adverse side-effects is fairly limited. However, that this does not mean that there is no risk in using the shampoos, because every individual is different and therefore the susceptibility to unpleasant side-effects of any individual person using such as shampoo is an unknown.

For example, in the case of shampoos based on [selenium sulfide](#), it is known that this particular chemical can exaggerate pre-existing dry or oily skin, and skin irritation is not unknown. In more extreme cases, selenium sulfide can accelerate natural hair loss, which it is to be assumed is not the primary intention of anyone who is using a medicated shampoo to get rid of their dandruff!

Shampoos that contain pyrithione zinc are generally safe for most people, but some people do suffer allergic reactions to the chemical such as skin rashes, hives and lesions.

It should also be noted that several sources suggest that using a pyrithione zinc based cleaning agent such as a shampoo over a prolonged period of time might increase the chance of adverse side-effects, so caution is necessary because it cannot be said with any certainty that pyrithione zinc is categorically safe. You should therefore be on the lookout for skin irritations or skin that does not heal as well as it did previously, and if either of these is encountered, you should report the fact to your medical attendant.

Shampoos that are based on ketoconazole are using a substance that is known to cause itching, nausea, vomiting, headache and abdominal pain, dizziness and fatigue. In extreme examples, it is believed that ketoconazole can even cause blood disorders and impotence so using a shampoo based on this particular chemical antifungal agent is something that you should do with extreme caution.

In tests, shampoos containing ketoconazole have been shown to be more effective than those that contain pyrithione zinc. On the other hand, it is also established that the possible side-effects of ketoconazole are considerably more unpleasant or dangerous than those of the zinc compound. In simple terms, ketoconazole is potentially more effective, but it is also potentially more dangerous as well.

The truth about using antifungal chemical based shampoos is that in the majority of cases, they are unlikely to do anyone significant harm, particularly on a short-term basis. This is relevant, because although dandruff is a chronic condition that can often be with you for a lifetime and is incurable, it is also a condition that is seasonal.

Hence, you might find that whilst it is necessary during the colder, damper months to use a medicated shampoo containing one of the chemicals highlighted in this chapter, it may be unnecessary to use that shampoo all year round. This is something that will depend upon where you live and the severity of your condition, but it is nevertheless true that if you choose to use a chemical based medicated shampoo, you should try to avoid doing so on a permanent basis.

And of course, if any of the side-effects highlighted in this chapter become apparent, you should report the details about your condition to your medical attendant as soon as possible.

There is no solution that is perfect for everyone

Perhaps one more irritating factor for people who suffer dandruff is that it always seems as if the treatments that work superbly well for other people do not work at all for you.

Whether you are looking at chemical-based shampoos as highlighted in the previous chapter or whether you are considering natural dandruff treatments, the same always seems to apply.

You know someone who uses 'Brand X' shampoo or 'natural treatment Y', and it has got rid of their dandruff almost completely, and yet it does not seem to touch your condition at all.

This is a simple but extremely unfortunate result of the fact that every one of us is different, and we all react to different substances in a different way. In practical terms, what this means is that if you have dandruff, it is a matter of trial and error, testing various different ideas and solutions until you find something that works.

However, it is important that whenever you try different solutions for your dandruff problem, you should start with those that are the least likely to cause you adverse side-effects.

This almost inevitably means trying natural solutions before moving on to those based on chemicals if the natural solutions do not work, because as I have already suggested, although most chemical-based shampoos do not carry significant risk of side-effects, there is nevertheless a degree of risk involved in using them.

And as you will discover in the next chapter, controlling your dandruff problem is not simply a matter of applying different substances to your scalp until you find one that works (although you will of course do so).

The first thing that you should do to try to bring your dandruff problem under control is to consider your current lifestyle to assess whether there are any changes that you can make that could help to reduce your dandruff.

For example, I have already highlighted that many experts believe that stress and anxiety plays an active role in determining how bad (or how well controlled) your dandruff problem is.

Consequently, if you can reduce the level or degree of stress in your life, it stands to reason that this will represent a significant lifestyle improvement. This improvement should in turn make it easier to control your dandruff, which in itself will probably further reduce your stress and anxiety (it's a pleasant circle as opposed to a vicious one!).

Let us therefore consider some changes that you can make or regimes that you can introduce into your life which will help to reduce the adverse factors or conditions in your current existence that aggravate your dandruff problem.

You really are what you eat!

I know that it is a cliché, but from the day you were born, every centimeter that you have added to your frame has been put there as a direct result of the food you eat and the beverages you drink. It is therefore absolutely, 100% true that you are what you eat (and drink of course).

From this, it naturally follows that everything you eat and drink has a profound effect on your general well-being, health and overall life. Consequently, if you suffer from a problem like dandruff, whilst you might be genetically predisposed to it, it does not necessarily mean that you have to accept it without attempting to fight back.

Part of this fighting back process has got to be reassessing what you currently eat and drink every day to see whether there are improvements you can make which might help to control your dandruff.

As suggested previously, you should try to avoid eating a diet that is too rich in spicy foods, because not only is there a chance that spicy foods might increase your bodily secretions, it is also a fact that some spices irritate the average human metabolism. When your body is irritated, it naturally tries to counteract this irritation by fighting back which in turn can lead to internal imbalances.

Internal imbalances will often manifest themselves in sickness, susceptibility to infections and other external indications of imbalance, one of which could well be worsened dandruff.

There are other foodstuffs that you should reduce (or completely cut) your intake of that are believed to have a direct effect on the production of sebum which feeds the yeast that leads to dandruff. For example, cutting down on the saturated fats of the kind that are contained in red meat such as beef whilst also reducing your intake of trans-fatty acids that are often found in margarine could help to reduce your susceptibility to dandruff, because both of these forms of fat are believed to encourage increased sebum production.

Whether you are a dandruff sufferer or not, it is common knowledge that a diet rich in colorful fruit and vegetables is always good to you, but what might not be that well known is that it is a particularly good idea for someone with dandruff to eat a vegetable and fruit rich diet. Many of these foods are rich in minerals and B. vitamins and it is generally accepted that a deficiency of both of these nutrients can aggravate a dandruff problem.

Hence, you should include a good portion of leafy green vegetables, potatoes, bananas, red chili peppers and lentils in your diet as all of

these are a rich source of different minerals and vitamin B. variants. The B. vitamins help to counteract the inefficient metabolism of fatty acids and carbohydrates which is in turn believed to contribute to the incidence of dandruff, so increasing the level of these vitamins in your diet is a significant step towards freeing yourself of the misery of dandruff.

If you do not consume milk as part of your everyday diet, you should, because it contains every vitamin that mammals need for good health. The fat soluble vitamins such as vitamin A., K., D. and E. are all contained in the milk fat, so if you drink no-fat or reduced fat milk, you will not take much of any of these vitamins on board.

On the other hand, the B. group vitamins are found in the aqueous (water based) part of the milk, so even if you take reduced fat milk, you will still take on board a significant amount of B. vitamins. Incidentally, fluid milk in the USA is often supplemented with vitamin D., whilst in other countries, different vitamin supplements are added to fluid milk, such as vitamin A.

It is also believed that vitamin D-3 has many benefits, particularly for your skin. Unfortunately, the human body does not generate vitamin D. without some outside assistance although each and every one of us needs vitamin D. in order to maintain good health. However, it is generated primarily by the skin due to the effects of sunlight in combination with certain foodstuffs such as milk, cheese, butter, cereals and fatty fish.

Of course, many of us see very little of the sun, perhaps because we live in a part of the world where there is not a great deal of sunshine for a significant proportion of the year, or perhaps because the majority of people work in an indoor environment. It is for these reasons that vitamin D deficiency is most commonly seen in people who live in the northern regions at higher latitudes who see less of the sun than people that live close to the equator.

Furthermore, even for people who live in sunnier climes, their concern over the possibility of contracting skin cancer leads many to use sunscreen every time they venture outdoors. Whilst taking such precautions is obviously sensible in some ways, it does unfortunately mean that perhaps as much as 95% of the body's ability to generate vitamin D. is cancelled out by the application of sunscreen.

Recent studies have indicated that many patients who are suffering from a wide variety of inflammatory conditions were vitamin D deficient. The connection between vitamin D. and inflammatory conditions (of which dandruff is one example) was further emphasized by the fact that

the condition of many of these patients improved once additional vitamin D. was added to their diet.

There are various different forms in which vitamin D. can be taken, but it is generally agreed that vitamin D3, the form that is typically found in fish oil or other oily fish related products is the most beneficial because it appears to be the form from which vitamin D. can be absorbed most efficiently.

Some nutritionists suggest that increasing the amount of gamma-linolenic acid (GLA) in your diet can also assist anyone with a dandruff problem to minimize the size of that problem.

It is believed that increasing the amount of GLA in your diet will help to improve the general condition of your skin and hair, so it is probably worth adding a rich source of GLA such as blackcurrant or evening primrose oil to your diet to see what difference this makes.

Stress is not always bad, but...

A degree of stress in your life is not always a bad thing. It can make you more alert and helps to build character and endurance. However, there are times when it all gets too much, and when that happens, one result can be a marked deterioration in your dandruff.

Repetitive stress brings on chronic fatigue, meaning that your health and wellbeing can suffer in many ways, a negative change that can be reflected in worsening dandruff. For instance, stress can lead to depression, a lack of energy, insomnia and hair loss as well as deteriorating dandruff, so it obviously makes sense to keep the stress in your life to a manageable level.

Here is an extremely simple but nevertheless effective way of 'destressing' yourself. Take a nice warm bath every day, because when it is done right, it is one of the best ways of relaxing, one that far too few people really give serious credence to.

In order to get the maximum relaxation from what is for most people an immensely pleasurable experience, here are a few things that you should make sure you do.

First, pay attention to the temperature of the water. You have never heard anyone advise you to take a nice *cold* bath, right? That's because cold is not something that most of us would consider to be nice or conducive to being relaxed? Hot water of between 35 degrees (96°F) and 39 degrees Celsius (102°F) is ideal for relaxing the muscles, improving your circulation, soothing your nerves and giving your immune system a 'pep-up'.

Secondly, think about the environment that you bathe in and how it can be improved to aid your efforts to relax completely. Mood music – soft and gentle – can definitely help, possibly because as the experts point out, we all listened to the sound of our mothers heartbeat when we were in the womb and were relaxed by it. Hence, recreating a similar protective environment by using relaxing sounds or music can return us to that happier, more relaxed state.

The lighting in your bathroom can also have a big positive effect, with darker almost always helping you to relax more effectively.

This is because when it is darker, your body naturally reacts by increasing the secretion of a hormone called melatonin, which is produced by the pineal gland in your brain in response to the dimmer light. Melatonin makes you drowsy, which is why it is easier for most people to go to sleep at night when it is dark than it is during the daylight hours.

Aromatherapy is something that should form an integral part of your de-stressing bath time routine, irrespective of age or gender. Using aromatic bath oils is a terrific way of relaxing itself, because not only does the heat from the water make it easier for the relaxing oil molecules to permeate your skin, it also releases those molecules into the air as well.

Unlike the other senses, something that you smell has direct access to your brain via your olfactory receptors, hence it is known that aromatic oils that you inhale can have a direct effect on your hormones, your brain chemistry and stress levels.

Tests have indicated that there are certain essential oils that are particularly good for relieving stress, such as lavender oil or chamomile. Of the group of around 40 such oils and herbs that can play a significant role in ensuring that you are as relaxed as possible, others are dandelion, burdock root, peppermint, rosemary and juniper.

If at all possible, you should plan to take a relaxing hot bath in an ideal environment using aromatic oils at least once a day. By having and sticking to a 'planned out in advance' strategy in this way, it should be relatively easy to make sure that you always have essential oils that you need in the house.

However, there may be times when oils are not available, so you might need to 'manufacture' something that can act as an effective aromatic oils stand-in from common household substances. Here are a few suggestions.

If you have herbal teabags available, drop a couple of them in your bath water before immersing yourself in it. Yes, the water may turn a slightly strange color, but it is not going to stain you forever, and the upside benefits will far outweigh any potential downside.

Alternatively, mix a cup of baby oil with one tablespoonful of vanilla extract, and use the mixture in the bath. Slices of citrus fruits like orange, lemons and grapefruit can work extremely effectively as well, particularly because grapefruit releases enkephalins into the air which are natural painkillers. Try mixing one cup of honey together with four of cheap red wine (even older, oxidized wine is fine) and use this mixture in your bathwater.

Any of these mixtures will help to create the relaxing bath time atmosphere that you need to remove harmful stress from your life. If by taking a bath every day in this way you can significantly reduce the anxiety and stress that you feel, it will help to boost your general wellbeing, which in turn represents a significant step to reducing your dandruff problem.

Yoga, meditation and breathing to combat stress

It is generally accepted that practicing yoga, learning to meditate and how to breathe properly will all help to reduce the stress that you might feel on a day-to-day basis.

The best part about learning any of these practices is that there is so much information available on the net that can help you to get started. These resources are invaluable, because they allow you to 'have a go' at yoga, meditation and learning to breathe properly before deciding whether it is for you.

The advantages of being able to learn about and to try these practices in the comfort of your own home should be relatively easy to appreciate. Not only can you learn at your own speed without having to leave home, you do not need to enroll in a class (and spend money) only to find that yoga or whatever it is does not suit your lifestyle or preferences.

Obviously, yoga or meditation is not for everyone, but because these practices are widely accepted to 'teach' people who are adept at them how to relax and therefore minimize stress, each of them is worth investigating further and trying.

For instance, by looking at a site like [Learning Yoga](#), you can learn plenty about the history of yoga, what it can do for you and how you can get started at home. Search Google for 'yoga', and you will find plenty more similar resources that can teach you everything you could ever need to know about yoga and its benefits.

Similarly, try a Google search for 'meditation' or 'learning meditation' ([this site](#) is a good starting point) and 'breathing' or '[deep breathing](#)' to find all of the information and resources that you could need in order to get you started.

Once again, reducing your everyday stress levels will improve your dandruff, and all of these practices will help to reduce stress.

Whilst you might therefore never have considered yoga, meditation or learning to breathe properly as practices that could help to combat your dandruff problem, they almost certainly can and will, so they're all worth trying.

Other natural approaches to minimizing dandruff

More aromatherapy

In addition to using aromatherapy at bath time as highlighted in the previous chapter, a leading herbalist [Jeanne Rose](#) (Director of the Institute of Aromatic Studies) suggests a more direct use of aromatic oils as a way of combating dandruff. Her suggestion is that after washing your hair, you should let your hair dry completely before massaging a few drops each of lemon and rosemary oils into your scalp.

These oils have natural antifungal characteristics, meaning that they will fight to keep the amount of yeast on your scalp to a minimum.

Ayurveda

It is suggested by leading expert, [David Frawley](#), that dandruff is a condition called by poor or blocked circulation. He has suggested a couple of possible solutions to this problem.

The first option is to massage sesame oil into your scalp for 5 or 10 minutes once or twice a week immediately before taking your evening shower. After massaging the oil in, allow it to 'sit' for a few minutes before washing it out in the shower.

Alternatively, Dr. Frawley also suggests that fenugreek is a recognized treatment for dandruff in Ayurvedic medicine. It is also a spice that is widely used in Asian cooking, so you can either add it to your own home cooking or you can take it as a powder mixed with honey.

Homoeopathy

According to one of the UK's leading medically qualified homoeopaths, [Dr Andrew Lockie](#), there are quite a few homoeopathic treatments that can be very effective for combating dandruff.

According to Dr Lockie, you should try using sulphur if you find yourself persistently scratching your head at night or if your scalp burns and you have thick, heavy dandruff. Try massaging sulphur into your scalp three or four times a day for a period of two weeks, and you should find that your dandruff eases considerably.

On the other hand, he suggests that sepia will soothe your scalp if it is greasy, moist and sensitive to the touch around the roots.

However, when you are massaging these soothing substances into your scalp (or any other substances for that matter), do take care that you do not massage it into your skull too vigorously. Studies have indicated that if you are too vigorous and energetic, you will damage your hair around the roots which can speed up your natural hair loss process.

Consequently, you should try to avoid significant amounts of contact between your fingernails and your hair, particularly around the roots, because it is your nails that are likely to cause most damage, and damage makes your hair fall out much more quickly.

A third option that is propounded by Dr Lockie is to use oleander if you feel that the palpable irritation from your dandruff is worsened by heat, or if you feel as if your head is covered in insect bites.

All three substances suggested by Dr Lockie can be obtained at health food stores and possibly some pharmacies as well.

According to some research, adding flaxseed oil to your diet can help to significantly reduce the amount of oil that your skin secretes, and as we have already seen, it is the sebum that your skin secretes that provides the Malassezia yeast with something to feed and thrive on. It is believed that two or three teaspoonfuls of flaxseed oil every day (or the equivalent amount in capsules) will significantly reduce the amount of sebum you secrete, thereby reducing the 'yeast food' on your scalp which should in turn reduce your dandruff as well.

Vitamins and minerals for a healthy head

Earlier in this report, I highlighted the importance of eating a healthy balanced diet in your efforts to reduce or get rid of your dandruff problem.

Unfortunately however, for many people, eating a healthy balanced diet every day is extremely difficult or impossible, primarily because with work and the day-to-day demands of living, it is simply not feasible to eat a healthy balanced meal at every meal time.

It is also true that in the modern world, many of the foods that we eat do not contain the vitamins and minerals that they should do because far too often, those vitamins and minerals have been removed in the process of getting that food from its origin to your table.

For instance, unless you buy only organic vegetables, many of the vegetables that you are eating will have been grown in soil which is lacking in the minerals that form a very important part of a healthy diet. This is a natural side-effect of the fact that the demands on farming are increasingly heavy, meaning that the farmers who are responsible for growing the vegetables that you eat are forced into growing vegetables in soil of increasingly poor quality.

Taking these different factors together, it becomes an unavoidable conclusion that there are many people who will not take on board the necessary vitamins and nutrients through their food, whether they are conscious of this (i.e. if the knowingly eat a poorer quality diet) or they

are not. Consequently, dandruff sufferers who are not taking on board a healthy balanced diet are aggravating the severity of their problem internally.

For this situation to be turned round, supplementation of your diet with vitamins and minerals is therefore necessary.

The vitamins and minerals that you need to add to your diet if you suffer from dandruff are as follows, with an indication of what each of these vitamins and minerals will do for you:

- Vitamin B12 is believed to increase energy levels at the root level of your hair;
- Vitamins B3, B5 and B6 stimulate healthy hair growth and stimulate the scalp;
- Vitamin C. encourages and growth and improves circulation throughout the body, including on the scalp;
- Vitamin D. helps to control inflammatory conditions such as dandruff and psoriasis;
- Iron helps to maintain the basic health of your hair, particularly the roots;
- Zinc is an antibacterial that can help to fight the yeast on your head;
- Folic acid helps to minimize hair loss.

All of these nutrients stimulate the blood supply to your scalp, which in turn helps the top of your head to stay healthier. In effect, by making sure that all of these vitamins and nutrients are included either in your diet or in supplements, you are ensuring that you are dealing with your dandruff problem from the root (in more ways than one).

You are combating the problem internally by providing your body needs to fight your problem completely naturally, so the importance of supplementing the kind of poor diet that many of us simply have to live with it cannot be underestimated.

Natural shampoo dandruff solutions

There are some anti-dandruff shampoos that are based on natural or relatively natural substances that you might want to consider using as an alternative to those that contain potentially damaging chemicals.

The two most common and widely available commercially produced shampoos that are based on natural substances are those which use tea tree oil or coal tar.

[Tea tree oil](#) or Melaleuca oil is taken from the Melaleuca alternifolia tree that is found on the north-east coast of New South Wales in Australia. It is a natural antibacterial, antiseptic, germicidal and fungicidal oil that had been used for hundreds of years as a medicinal treatment for a huge range of medical conditions by the native peoples of Australia.

Given all of these qualities possessed by tea tree oil, it is not surprising that it should be an effective additive to many leading brands of antidandruff shampoo. The natural antifungal qualities of tea tree oil will help to keep down the amount of yeast on your scalp, with most commercially produced tea tree oil based shampoos containing around 5% of the oil, which has been shown to be the most effective concentration in a commercially produced shampoo.

In fact, extensive research in Australia as reported in 2002 in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology indicated that a tea tree oil shampoo with 5% concentration of oil improved dandruff for 41% of people tested. From this statistic, there can be little doubt that tea tree oil shampoo is probably the most effective of the commercially produced shampoos based on natural substances for minimizing the worst effects of dandruff.

It is also effective for getting rid of head lice as well, so if it is lice that are causing what appeared to be a dandruff problem, this is an easy way to get rid of your unwanted guests.

There are no known adverse side-effects from using tea tree oil, although it is not a substance that you can ingest, so if you get tea tree oil shampoo in your mouth, you should immediately rinse it out with a plentiful supply of water.

Shampoo that is based on coal tar uses a substance that is produced as a byproduct of the carbonization of coal. Coal tar shampoo is often an effective treatment for dandruff, although because there is some concern that using coal tar in too great a concentration might possibly have some carcinogenic elements, you should ensure that any coal tar shampoo you use contains only a trace of coal tar.

Herbs and other natural substances to combat dandruff

Because dandruff is a chronic condition the cause of which is still not completely established or agreed, the range of possible solutions that are claimed to work to treat the condition are almost endless.

Everyone who has ever suffered from dandruff (and remember that one of the biggest anti-dandruff shampoo manufacturers, Procter & Gamble suggest that there are more dandruff sufferers than people who are completely dandruff free) has their own pet solution to the problem.

There are literally hundreds of these proposed solutions published all over the internet, some of which are likely to be far more effective than others. However, because each and every individual can sufferer is different, it is not possible to suggest which of the treatments which you are going to read about are likely to be most effective in any individual case.

Nevertheless, there are some of these treatments which are recommended on a wide variety of different sites, some of which are sites that have a good degree of authority (recognized medical sites, commonly used reference sites like about.com and eHow.com).

Consequently, these suggestions have been listed first, primarily because the fact that they appear on many different sites indicates that they work for many different people, whereas some of the other proposed solutions might be effective for far less people.

Vinegar is almost always effective

Ever since man first discovered vinegar, it has been widely and commonly used for a great range of different medicinal purposes. It is extremely effective for dealing with dandruff, because it is rich in potassium and enzymes which will help to prevent an itchy scalp and dandruff.

There are many different ways you can use vinegar, as there are many different types of vinegar that you can use.

The first, most simple and basic way of using vinegar is to add just enough vinegar to color a bowl of warm water before gently rubbing the solution into your scalp before retiring to bed for the night. Wrap your head in a towel to ensure that the solution does not evaporate or soak away into your pillow so that you can leave the solution on your head overnight.

Do this every night for a couple of weeks, and you should start to notice a significant improvement in your dandruff situation.

Alternatively, mix four tablespoons of white vinegar together with two tablespoons of lemon juice. Gently massage the mixture into your scalp with your fingertips, once again trying to avoid contact between your fingernails and your hair. Try to use a gentle circular rubbing motion, because this stimulates the blood flow to your scalp which also helps to minimize the likelihood of dandruff developing.

Leave the solution on for 30 minutes to one hour before washing it off with a gentle shampoo.

Incidentally, whilst you have probably tried medicated, anti-dandruff shampoos and you might even use them on a regular basis despite the possibility of adverse side-effects, you should try to avoid combining any of the natural remedies in this chapter with a medicated shampoo for several reasons.

Firstly, if you combine one of the natural solutions from this chapter with medicated shampoo, and you see a significant improvement in your dandruff problem, it will be hard to isolate whether it is the natural solution or the medicated shampoo that has made the difference.

Secondly, it does not appear that there has been any extensive research done into the possible reactions between medicated shampoos and the natural substances highlighted in this section. Whilst this may not appear likely should be a major concern, you do have to remember that a substance like vinegar is extremely acidic, and therefore the possibility of some kind of chemical reaction between the chemicals in medicated shampoo and a vinegar-based solution cannot be completely discounted.

Try mixing vinegar and beetroot juice together before massaging it into the scalp, leaving for 10 to 15 minutes and then rinsing the mixture out. Alternatively, a combination of ginger and beetroot juice can also be extremely effective, because both of these juices have powerful antifungal qualities that can attack the yeast on your scalp which can lead to dandruff if it is left to its own devices.

Apple cider vinegar is one particular variety of vinegar that has long been known to have significant health benefits, particularly in the realm of skin complaints.

This is because it is believed to stimulate blood circulation in the small capillaries just under the skin, plus it also has the ability to combat bacteria, viruses and the yeast that we have already established as one of the primary causes of dandruff. Furthermore, apple cider vinegar is rich in the alpha-hydroxyl acids that are known to help to break down fatty, oily deposits on the skin, thereby reducing the amount of sebum on which the yeast that causes dandruff feeds.

As a topical treatment dandruff, you can use apple cider vinegar diluted or undiluted. In the first case, add one part vinegar to three parts warm water before gently massaging the solution into your scalp with exactly the same gentle circular rubbing motion as highlighted previously. Leave the solution on your head for half to one hour before washing out with a gentle shampoo such as baby shampoo.

Alternatively, for more severe case of dandruff, you can use apple cider vinegar in the same way in its undiluted form.

Another method of using apple cider vinegar is to mix it with warm water as suggested a moment ago before spraying it onto your hair with a spray bottle, taking care to avoid getting the solution in your eyes or ears. Once again, leave a solution on your head for an hour or so before gently washing it off.

Another home-made dandruff treatment formulation that includes apple cider vinegar which you can easily create at home is as follows:

Mix together one tablespoon of apple cider vinegar, two tablespoons of cornmeal or oatmeal and half a cup of grape seed oil. Mix the whole lot together until you have a thick, coagulated paste and then apply the mixture to your scalp by gently massaging it in. Leave the substance on your head for around one hour before rinsing off and shampooing with a gentle, non-medicated shampoo as per normal.

In this mixture, the apple cider vinegar does as it does in most cases, which is to balance the pH of your scalp, which is important, because in most dandruff sufferers, their scalp pH balance is skewed. On the other hand, the grape seed oil nourishes and soothes your skin, whilst the meal exfoliates the dead skin flakes.

As you can begin to understand, apple cider vinegar can be used in a wide variety of ways, with another option being nothing more complex than adding a few drops of the vinegar to the final rinse you give your hair after washing it. As an alternative, add a few drops of lime or lemon juice to the final rinse, because once again, the acid nature of the fruit juice will destroy a significant percentage of the yeast on your scalp.

Tea tree oil

As suggested previously, although recent research has indicated that tea tree oil taken from the *Melaleuca alternifolia* tree has potent antifungal and antibacterial qualities, this is a fact that the native peoples of Australia have known for many hundreds of years.

Although for many people to tree oil shampoo is effective, it can be even more so if the oil is applied directly to the scalp, particularly if your dandruff is of the more serious or severe variety.

You can apply the oil several times a week by gently massaging it into your head and then leaving it on your hair for 30 minutes to one hour if at all possible.

Alternatively, buy the mildest non-medicated shampoo you can find (for example, baby oil), and mix the tea tree oil into shampoo, using around 10 drops of oil for every eight fluid ounces of shampoo in the bottle. Use this natural antidandruff shampoo in exactly the same way that you would use ordinary shampoo, and you should see your dandruff problem receding fairly rapidly.

Because of its antifungal qualities, tea tree oil is highly effective for minimizing the amount of yeast on your scalp, which in turn will do a great deal to minimize your dandruff as well.

Aloe vera to combat dandruff

Aloe vera is another natural substance that has potent antifungal qualities, so applying the substance in gel form to your scalp is another good way of reducing the amount of yeast on your head and in your hair.

Alternatively, you can buy aloe vera juice which you can drink to supplement your normal diet. The juice contains many of the vitamins that you need in order to combat dandruff effectively, including vitamins A., B1., B6., B12. and vitamin E. as well as folic acid.

Aloe vera juice also contains 12 natural substances that have been shown to inhibit inflammatory conditions, and it helps to produce healthy skin as it provides a rich supply of collagen and elastin which repair and regenerate healthy skin.

In short, by drinking aloe vera juice as well as applying it topically to your scalp, you are fighting against your dandruff condition both internally and topically, which if nothing else should double your chances of successfully defeating your dandruff problem.

Olive oil

Olive oil has been used for many centuries to combat a wide range of different medical conditions and it has long been recognized as an effective treatment for severe dandruff. Olive oil contains vitamin E. and many other nutrients that are essential for healthy skin, so it is a solution that is worth trying.

Many sources suggest that olive oil becomes even more effective if it is mixed together in equal quantities with almond oil before the mixture is

gently massaged into the scalp with the fingertips with gentle circular motions. The mixture should be left on for five to 10 minutes, although if it starts to become uncomfortable or feel like it is beginning to burn (which seems to happen for a very small percentage of people who try this particular solution), you should wash it off immediately.

Otherwise, although the mixture might feel a little clammy or perhaps too oily whilst you are applying it, you should try to avoid washing it off until the mixture has completely dried out.

Many other natural dandruff treatments in brief...

As suggested in the preamble to this chapter, there are literally hundreds of different natural dandruff treatments that you will find detailed on a similarly large number of websites. The following list is intended to be a brief snapshot of many of these suggested methods that you might want to try:

Apple tonic: Mix one tablespoon of apple juice with three tablespoons of water and massage the mixture into your scalp three times a week.

Coconut oil and lemons: Massage warm pure coconut oil into your scalp and then rub in the juice of two lemons. Steam your hair by placing your head over a bowl of steaming hot water with the steam sealed in with a warm damp towel. After steaming for a few minutes, leave the mixture on your hair for a couple of hours before rinsing off, and repeat two or three times every week.

Thyme: Boil five heaped tablespoons of dried thyme in about a pint of water for a period of 10 to 15 minutes. After this, allow the infused liquid to cool before straining the thyme leaves out of the mixture and storing the resulting liquid in a jar. Keep in the fridge and massage the liquid into your scalp three or four times a week, taking care not to rinse the solution out.

Baking soda: It is now established that [baking soda](#) has powerful antifungal qualities, so making up a baking soda paste with warm water before applying it to your scalp should help to keep down the yeast which ultimately cause dandruff.

Winter melon or ash gourd: It is suggested on many ayurvedic medicine sites that grinding the seeds and skin of [Winter melon](#) and then mixing them together with a little warm water before applying the mixture to the scalp can help to control dandruff. Once again, it appears that this mixture has powerful antifungal qualities so that it is effective for keeping yeast at bay.

Peanut oil and lemons: Mix the juice of half a lemon with eight teaspoons of peanut oil and rub the mixture into your hair. Leave the

mixture on your scalp for 10 to 15 minutes before washing the solution away as normal.

Rosemary: Rosemary is the active ingredient in many commercial hair tonics and shampoo which rejuvenates the scalp and keeps the skin healthy. You may be able to buy rosemary oil in a health food shop, but if not, add eight tablespoons of dried rosemary to a pint of boiling water, oil solution to five minutes and then drain the wasted rosemary leaves away. Apply the solution to your scalp and leave on your head for as long as possible.

Indian hemp: Indian hemp (also known as dogbane, wild cotton or amy root) is a plant that can be found growing wild throughout North America that can be used to reduce dandruff. Simply crush the plant to extract the juice before applying that juice directly to the scalp. Leave for an hour and then wash off.

Conclusion

As you will no doubt have gathered by now, there is no shortage of natural solutions for dandruff. Whilst none of these solutions can be presented as a complete cure for a condition that has so far eluded such a thing being discovered, many of the treatments that you have read of in this book are extremely effective.

As with all medical conditions that require treatment, from the mildest to the most severe, there are natural solutions available for your dandruff problem that you should try before turning to chemical-based solutions.

Whilst most of the chemical-based shampoos on the market have proved to be harmless for most users, there are a significant minority of people who suffer from dandruff for whom chemical-based shampoos are likely to make the problem worse rather than better. These are people who have particularly sensitive skin so that chemicals are more likely to aggravate their skin problems than help to clear up their dandruff.

However, even if you're not a person who suffers from overly sensitive skin, it still makes a great deal of sense to try natural solutions for your dandruff problem before turning to chemical-based shampoos, creams or potions. As suggested many times in this book, every individual dandruff sufferer is different so what works for one person will not necessarily work for another.

Nevertheless, there is no shortage of natural dandruff treatment choices available and I have attempted to highlight as many of the most effective natural dandruff treatments in this book.

After reading this far, you should also have a far better understanding of your dandruff and what causes it. Consequently, you should be able to instigate lifestyle changes that can limit or minimize the outbreaks of dandruff that you will suffer subsequent to consuming the information contained herein.

Dandruff is a problem that is never fully cured. However, as I hope you appreciate by now, it is not on the other hand necessary to live with the worst ravages of dandruff without doing something about it.

To combat dandruff is not difficult or complex, and armed with the knowledge that you now have, there is no reason to tolerate your dandruff for one moment longer.