Does Psoriasis Cause Hair Loss?

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What You Need to Know About Psoriasis Hair Loss

Psoriasis affects 7.5 million Americans, and half of those people suffer with psoriasis of the scalp.

Psoriasis is an autoimmune disease that causes skin cells to grow rapidly, building up in patches. Normal skin cells mature and shed in 28-30 days, while psoriatic cells mature and shed in two to three days, causing the buildup of the patches.

It can exhibit as a singular patch, or many patches over the body. It can affect any area of the skin, from the scalp, to the feet, to the arms.

Psoriasis typically develops when the sufferer is between 15 and 20 or between 50 and 60. However, 75 percent of people are affected by the age of 40.

Symptoms of Scalp Psoriasis

As with psoriasis in other areas of the body, scalp psoriasis can range from mild to severe. Mild scalp psoriasis causes slight scaling, whereas moderate to severe scalp psoriasis can cause scaly patches, silvery scales, flaking that resembles dandruff, itching, soreness and hair loss.

Hair loss? If you suffer from scalp psoriasis and are dealing with trying to heal the scaly patches, hair loss is the last thing you want to deal with.

When you see the thinning hair, you may wonder two things: “Why?” and “is this permanent?”

Hair Loss and Scalp Psoriasis

Scalp psoriasis doesn’t cause hair loss as a direct result of the disease process. This means that although it is technically a listed symptom, the disease itself does not cause the hair to fall out.

If the psoriasis sufferer loses their hair, it is a direct result of scratching the scales, the harsh treatments required to treat psoriasis and the stress associated with psoriasis.

Hair loss associated with psoriasis is temporary. Hair typically grows back after the skin clears.

Treatment for Scalp Psoriasis

For hair loss associated with scalp psoriasis, as mentioned, stress can cause the hair loss. So, managing stress is essential.

Talking with loved ones, exercising, and getting enough sleep are all great ways to manage stress. I am also a major proponent for yoga to help with stress management.

The level of medical management depends on the severity of scalp psoriasis.

Mild Scalp Psoriasis

Topical products that contain tar and salicylic acid are very effective for mild cases. These can be purchased over-the-counter.

Steroids can be injected directly into the lesions if the case is mild. However, this treatment is used sparingly because the body can absorb steroids.

Moderate and Severe Scalp Psoriasis

These cases may require more elaborate treatment plans. They will require antimicrobial treatment if a yeast infection is suspected. It may require a combination of topical and systemic treatments:

- **Topical treatments** for moderate to severe scalp psoriasis require a prescription. Examples include anthralin, calcipotriene (a derivative of vitamin D), calcipotriene and betamethasone dipropionate (a combination of calcipotriene and a topical steroid), other steroids, and tazarotene (a derivative of vitamin A).
- **Oral treatments** for moderate to severe scalp psoriasis cyclosporine, methotrexate, and derivatives of vitamin A and vitamin D.
- **Intravenous medications called biologics** may keep the body from producing too many skin cells. The American Academy of Dermatology have outlined seven biologics that may be used to treat psoriasis: adalimumab (Humira), etanercept (Enbrel), etanercept-szzi (Ereizi), infliximab (Remicade), ixekinumab (Talz), secukinumab (Cosentyx), and ustekinumab (Stelara).

Phototherapy can be performed in a dermatologist’s office. This is performed with a laser or non-laser light source.

UV light can be concentrated directly onto the patches while avoiding the healthy skin surrounding the patches.

Treatments may need to be combined and/or adjusted on a routine basis. Psoriasis can be less responsive to treatments after a period of time.