

Dandruff Area Prescribing Committee Position Statement

The routine prescribing of anti-dandruff (e.g. coal tar or selenium) and anti-fungal shampoos (e.g. ketoconazole) for the treatment of 'dandruff' is not supported by Barnsley Area Prescribing Committee (APC).

Note: Anti-dandruff and anti-fungal shampoos have a formulary green classification for conditions that are not covered by the NHS England Self-Care guidance (e.g. Ketoconazole 2% shampoo for treatment of tinea (pityriasis) versicolor).

In line with NHS England guidance:

- New patients presenting with dandruff should be encouraged to self-care with shampoos purchased over the counter, unless the general exceptions stated in the guidance apply.***
- Patients currently prescribed anti-dandruff and anti-fungal shampoos for the treatment of 'dandruff' should have their prescription reviewed and patients should be encouraged to manage mild dandruff with long term over the counter treatments.***

Dandruff is included in the NHS England guidance '***Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.***'¹

In Barnsley, primary care expenditure on anti-dandruff and anti-fungal shampoos between March 2022 and February 2023 was approximately £49,054.

The Medicines Management Team can support primary care prescribers in reviewing patients and deprescribing anti-dandruff and anti-fungal shampoos for the treatment of dandruff.

Background^{1,2}

Anti-dandruff and anti-fungal shampoos are routinely prescribed for dandruff.

NHS England define dandruff as 'mild scaling of the scalp without itching'. Dandruff causes white or grey flakes of skin to appear on the scalp and in the hair. It isn't contagious or harmful and can be easily treated with long-term over-the-counter anti-dandruff and anti-fungal shampoos.

Dandruff is considered a mild form of seborrhoeic dermatitis.

Rationale for deprescribing Anti-dandruff and anti-fungal shampoos for mild dandruff^{2,3}

NHS England guidance on 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care' states that a prescription for the treatment dandruff should not routinely be offered in primary care as the condition is appropriate for self-care.

SY ICB Barnsley place self-care guidance can be found at : [Barnsley Place Self-Care Guidance.pdf](#)

The BNF defines dandruff as mild seborrhoeic dermatitis. Shampoos containing antimicrobial agents such as pyrithione zinc (which are widely available) and selenium may have beneficial effects. Shampoos

containing tar extracts may also be useful. These are easily obtained over the counter as self-care. The BNF states that [ketoconazole](#) shampoo should be considered for more persistent or severe dandruff.

Deprescribing ^{1,2,4,5}

- Dandruff is one of the minor conditions included within the NHS England guidance on 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care.'
- Counsel the patient to help them understand that dandruff is classed as mild scaling of the scalp without itching. Dandruff causes white or grey flakes of skin to appear on the scalp and in the hair. It is not contagious and usually clears up within weeks or months. Discuss **alternative treatment options**. This may involve self-care with an over-the-counter product, purchased from a community pharmacy or retail outlet.
- Please note the general exceptions on page 2 of the [Barnsley place self-care guidance](#), for example where the dandruff is not improving after use of an anti-dandruff or anti-fungal shampoo then a prescription may be appropriate.

Patient information ^{1,2,3,4}

- Counsel the patient that dandruff is nothing to be worried about as most people get dandruff from time to time.
- Counsel the patient to follow the manufacturer instructions regarding product use for treatment and prophylaxis.

Summary

Patients should be advised to:

- Purchase an anti-dandruff or anti-fungal shampoo over the counter for the treatment of dandruff.

References

1. NHS England guidance 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care Guidance for CCGs'
Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/otc-guidance-for-ccgs.pdf> <Accessed April 2023>
2. NICE NHS choices dandruff. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dandruff/> <Accessed April 2023>
3. NICE CKS topic seborrhoeic dermatitis prescribing information topics available over the counter. Available at: <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/seborrhoeic-dermatitis/prescribing-information/products-available-otc/> <Accessed April 2023>
4. BNF treatment summaries scalp and hair conditions. Available at: <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summaries/scalp-and-hair-conditions/>. <Accessed April 2023>.
5. NHS SY ICB Barnsley Place self-care guidance. Available at : [Self Care Guidance.pdf \(barnsleyccg.nhs.uk\)](#). <Accessed May 2023>

Development Process

This position statement was ratified at the Barnsley Area Prescribing Committee on 12th July 2023.