



## Health Notes

from the Lilydale Pharmacy

### Dandruff

Dandruff is a common condition caused by too much shedding of dead skin cells from the scalp. A normal scalp sheds old skin cells in a monthly cycle. At this rate the dead cells go unnoticed, as there are comparatively few of them at any one time. In dandruff the shedding occurs at a much greater rate, perhaps every week or even more often.

Dandruff can occur at any age but usually begins during the early teens and peaks around the age of 20. This suggests that hormone changes could be a factor in the development of dandruff.

Indeed, it seems likely there could be many factors contributing to the cause of dandruff; and although the exact cause remains a mystery, most skin specialists agree with what can be called the fungus theory. That is, dandruff is linked with the overgrowth on the scalp of a tiny fungus called *Pityrosporum ovale*, *P. ovale* for short.

This fungus lives on our bodies and scalp all the time. Unfortunately, however, for some people it increases in number and dandruff results. It should be no surprise, therefore, that specially formulated anti-fungal shampoos (Nizoral) are so effective in treating and preventing dandruff.

Other possible causes of dandruff may be overactive or clogged oil glands. The overactive oil glands increase the natural skin shedding process; clogged pores can lead to over-drying and flaking of the skin.

Infrequent shampooing, the use of poor conditioners, and inadequate rinsing of the hair may all contribute to dandruff. Excessive use of hair sprays, gels or hair colouring could also be a factor.

Nevertheless, remember, if your scalp is red, inflamed or bleeding check with a doctor. There are scalp conditions other than dandruff that cause itch and irritation. Psoriasis, seborrheic dermatitis and headlice can be other causes, and require different treatments.