

# Up Close

## A Look at Dermatological Diagnoses

by Catherine McCuaig, MD, FRCPC



### Seborrheic Dermatitis

#### Definition

Seborrheic dermatitis (SD) is a chronic inflammatory skin disorder involving the regions of the skin bearing many sebaceous glands, as well as intertriginous areas in babies.



Figure 1. Retroauricular greasy patches (infant).

#### Description

SD is a common dermatitis seen in infants, and later in adults 20 years and older. In adults, it is common with neurologic disease or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

SD is seen on the scalp (cradle cap), flexures, and diaper area in babies, usually clearing by six months of age. Adults may have fine scaling limited to the scalp (commonly called dandruff), or thick greasy-appearing patches of the scalp, ears, forehead, retroauricular sulci, nasolabial folds, and presternal regions.



Figure 2. Post-inflammatory hypopigmentation of an infant neck.



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Figure 3. Erythema in the inguinal fold (spared in irritant contact dermatitis).

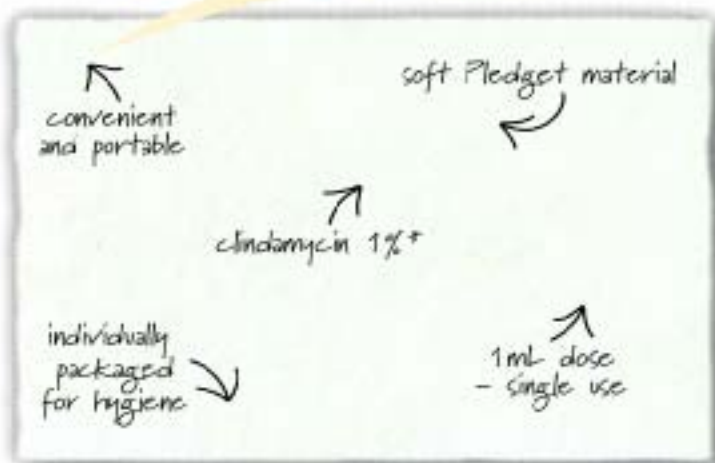


Figure 4. Scaling in nasolabial folds and chin of an adult woman.



Figure 5. Typical scaling of the outer ear (adult).

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Figure 6. Retroauricular SD (adult).

## Etiology

Emotional and neurologic stress plays a role, as does the cold winter weather with central dry heating. *Pityrosporum ovale* may be increased in number in the stratum corneum, particularly in patients with HIV.

## Treatment of SD

Shampoos (scalp):

- Keratolytic containing zinc pyrithione, selenium sulfide, tar.
- Avoid salicylic acid in infants
- Antifungal: Ketoconazole

Lotions (scalp):

- Mid-strength mometasone furoate, betamethasone valerate
- Desonide in infants

Creams (face and intertriginous areas):

- Antifungal: Ketoconazole
- Corticosteroid: 1% hydrocortisone, desonide 0.05%

**WARNING:** Avoid strong corticosteroids including mometasone furoate, hydrocortisone-17-valerate, betamethasone valerate on the face. These commonly lead to perioral dermatitis, telangiectasia, and atrophy. [CME](#)

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- The Canadian Journal of CME Continuing Medical Education University of Manitoba:** Articles include "Talking to Your Patients about HIV", "What's New in Contemporary?", "How Much is Too Much? Dysfunctional System-Building", "Getting to the Bottom of Diabetes", and "Male Sexual Dysfunction Exposed".
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