

Treatment of dandruff with 5% tea tree oil shampoo.

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BACKGROUND: Dandruff appears to be related to the yeast *Pityrosporum ovale*. Tea tree oil has antifungal properties with activity against *P ovale* and may be useful in the treatment of dandruff. **OBJECTIVE:** We conducted a randomized, single-blind, parallel-group study to investigate the efficacy and tolerability of 5% tea tree oil and placebo in patients with mild to moderate dandruff. **METHODS:** One hundred twenty-six male and female patients, aged 14 years and older, were randomly assigned to receive either 5% tea tree oil shampoo or placebo, which was used daily for 4 weeks. The dandruff was scored on a quadrant-area-severity scale and by patient self-assessment scores of scaliness, itchiness, and greasiness. **RESULTS:** The 5% tea tree oil shampoo group showed a 41% improvement in the quadrant-area-severity score compared with 11% in the placebo group ($P < .001$). Statistically significant improvements were also observed in the total area of involvement score, the total severity score, and the itchiness and greasiness components of the patients' self-assessments. The scaliness component of patient self-assessment improved but was not statistically significant. There were no adverse effects. **CONCLUSION:** Five percent tea tree oil appears to be effective and well tolerated in the treatment of dandruff.