Hair dye burned my scalp? Help! [1]

Dear Alice,

I continue to have a problem with my scalp. Six months ago I left my hair dye on too long and chemically burned my scalp. My hairdresser recommended Nexus moisturizing shampoo and conditioner. Despite its use, I still have flaking and itching scalp. I've tried denorex, nizoral, and selenium sulfide shampoos and still have flaking. The only thing that seems to help me from scratching is applying Vaseline to my scalp at bedtime, but after shampooing out, I still have the same problem. Please help!

Answer

Dear Reader,

So scalp issues are making you want to curl up and dye? Most hair coloring and relaxing products contain ingredients that can be harsh to hair and skin. They can cause allergic reactions in some people, which may not develop until after repeated use. A patch test can be done before each application to determine a person's sensitivity to the product before (re)use. Following the directions on the packaging can certainly help prevent or limit irritation to the scalp, hair breakage, burning, hair loss, and/or other damage from using hair dyes or straighteners.

It's not clear from what you've written if you've sought any medical attention. Only a health care provider can determine if you do indeed have a scorched scalp or a different hairy situation, such as an allergic reaction. Many of the over-the-counter products you've tried to relieve the problem are formulated for skin conditions other than a chemical burn, such as dandruff or seborrheic dermatitis. Depending on the type of damage to your scalp, these treatments may actually be making your scalp's condition worse. It would be a good idea to be evaluated by your health care provider, who may refer you to a dermatologist.

Some additional points to consider:

- It may be a good idea to discontinue dying your hair until you've seen a health care provider, if you haven't stopped already. Continued dying could be re-irritating your scalp.
- Petroleum jelly, like Vaseline, is an oil-based product that, while seemingly soothing, can actually smother scorched skin by preventing air from contacting the skin. Petroleum jelly is not recommended for burn treatment and could even be making the situation worse.
- It might help to switch to very mild soaps and shampoos? medicated or strong
shampoos could be irritating your scalp further.

Good luck getting to the root of the itching,

Alice!

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