

Previously, we have discussed the skin on our body, its functions, and how we can improve its appearance externally, and now it is time to know our scalp. Let's get into it!

Skinification is a personal care term which describes the routine steps we follow to take care of something that matters to us from a holistic view. It stems from popular skin care routines, or as we like to call them the "skincare rituals". Yes, we address it as a ritual because we follow few steps to take the utmost care of our skin in the most religious ways possible. Skincare is not only about the skin on our body, but also the skin on our scalp. It is important that we give the same amount of care and attention from our head to toes.

To understand the whole process of skinification, let us start from scratch!

## Scalp types

We all buy our shampoos and conditioners based on our scalp type, right? But what are the scalp types, and why are they different for all of us?



There are three kinds of scalp types - dry, oily, and balanced (*Lucky are those who also have a balanced scalp type!*). Anyway, scalp type is not dependent on skin type on our face and body. For example, having a dry skin type does not necessarily give you a dry scalp. There can be several different combinations of – skin and scalp types.

A dry scalp can feel itchy, flaky, irritated, or tight... No, it is not dandruff, I can feel you, but the root cause of dandruff isn't our dry scalp. If anyone of us has a dry, flaky scalp, we know that we regularly wash our hair to get rid of flakes and debris. Although, after frequent washes, our scalp might still feel dry as it tries to absorb excess oil to stay moisturized. Dry scalp is often due to the loss of moisture, so it is important to prevent trans epidermal water loss (TEWL) through the scalp. Skin cells are always shedding all over our body, and it is normal, but for those with dry scalps this can advance into a frustrating experience which is not desirable.

Generally, it is assumed that dry flakes are the same as dandruff and occur on dry scalps. But a fun fact is that an oily scalp is more likely to experience dandruff than a dry scalp. There is too much moisture and bacteria gets trapped on the scalp by excess sebum.

Oily scalps experience an overproduction of sebum from the sebaceous glands. If our scalp is oily, our hair can look greasy, and flat only one day after we have just washed it. Sebum is the waxy substance which coats the hair strands and makes it greasy and oily which- attracts dirt and impurities. This dirty and greasy appearance drags us to washing our hair more frequently, which is a BIG NO! When our hair is over washed,

it triggers the scalp to produce more sebum. This excess sebum production activates dandruff due to *Malassezia globosa*, a microbe- that produces more oleic acid in response to excess sebum. This microbe is the one that irritates our scalp and turns flaky to get rid of the irritant. What a frustrating experience!

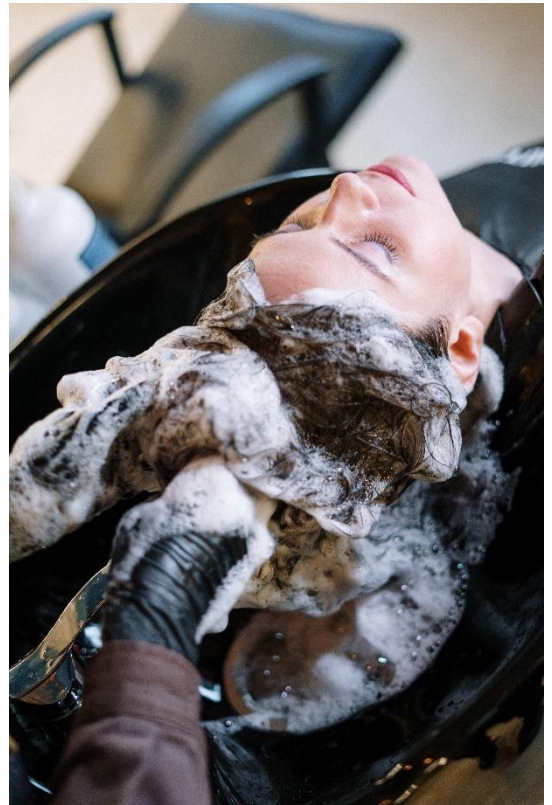
A balanced scalp type may sound unrealistic for those of us who experience dry or oily scalp types. It is so, because this type is well-hydrated, not stressed, and does not show any signs of dryness, flakes, irritation, or burns. If anyone does have a balanced scalp type, then please maintain it by washing once every 3-4 days. For the rest of us, let us try making this “fictional scalp” become real by skin-ifying our scalp.

### Scalp anatomy

The skin on our scalp is made of epidermis, pilosebaceous units, sebaceous glands, sweat glands, and various other sensory systems in addition to underlying dermal and adipose, also known as fat, layer. Our scalp skin has several physiological processes that are controlled internally and environmentally, as we previously discussed in our skin biology article.

In the areas of hair growth, our scalp is a multi-layered structure which is 5-8 mm from the skin surface to the base terminal hair follicle bulbs. The viable epidermis and stratum corneum form the visible scalp, which is a pale and translucent structure which extends between hair follicles into the opening of the hair canals. Caucasian scalp is not strongly pigmented, but can respond to excessive UV radiation by burning, tanning, freckling, especially with thinning hair. On the scalp, the stratum corneum is very important just like our body's skin, as it serves as a barrier both to trans epidermal water loss and preventing entry of toxic materials. A healthy Stratum corneum requires the right balance of natural moisturizing factors, epidermal- and sebum-derived lipids, urea, and lactic acid combined with normal cell turnover to maintain the structure and properties of the barrier.

The scalp's stratum corneum is made of 12 layers and is much thicker than the skin on our face and neck. This may be due to the exposure our scalp experiences to the environment. There are several factors that affect trans epidermal water loss and cell turnover which include age, environment, hormones, and mild inflammatory conditions.



## Scalp factors

Our scalp undergoes a variety of stress factors like UV radiation from the sun, heat tools, bleach treatments and, most importantly, physical stress from brushing. Many factors play into making the scalp environment which is uniquely different from our skin. However, we still must tend to the scalp in the same caring way that we tend to our skin. Imagine the scalp as a flower bed, where we must provide the best soil, rich in nutrients for beautiful and healthy hair to grow. It is important to understand what factors influence our scalp's health in order to better choose our hair care products.

## Skin-ify routine

Scalp skinification involves small, habitual changes to encourage the wellness of our hair and scalp. Let's try going by these:



Before shampooing, try incorporating a scalp scrub to exfoliate and clear away any built up, dead, skin cells. Next, a gentle scalp massage can help by stimulating blood circulation on the scalp, and relaxation. Be gentle with the scalp by giving it a slow rinse and wash it with regulated temperature water, not too hot or too cold water as environmental temperature can cause stress to the scalp. The most predominant step while washing and rinsing our hair is to treat it gently without causing any tension and stress on our hair and scalp. A scalp skinification routine does not need to start with a multitude of hair products, but with tender love and care.

As we can have learned, there are several factors to understand in order to achieve a holistically healthy scalp, from our scalp type to our hair styling habits. There is so much room to skin-ify our scalp and embrace scalp care- from serums, to tools that massage the scalp, scrubs and special scalp rinses to protect the scalp- and to grow fabulous hair.

Let us protect our scalp to have the hair which we dream of!

***Embrace scalp skinification, it's like a facial for your scalp!***

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