

# Scalp fungal infection in a child

**Q** Dear Doctor, My seven-year-old son developed a scalp fungal infection that has caused hair loss, scars, and patches. We suspect it started after a haircut at a nearby barbershop. Can the infection spread this way, and how can it be treated completely?

Peter

**A** Dear Peter, Scalp fungal infection in children, known as tinea capitis, can look alarming but is treatable, and hair often grows back once the infection clears.

Yes, the infection can spread through sharing poorly sterilised hair clippers, razors, combs, brushes, hats, or towels. Barbershops are a common source when equipment

Though alarming, scalp fungal infection (tinea capitis) in children is treatable and hair often grows back once the infection clears

is not disinfected between clients. It can also spread through direct head-to-head contact.

Poor hygiene contributes to the problem. Children aged five to 10 should be assisted by adults during bathing to ensure proper

cleaning of the scalp.

In some cases, the infection causes a severe inflammatory reaction called kerion, characterised by painful swelling, pus, or crusting. Hair may fall out in clumps, and delayed treatment can lead to

permanent scarring.

Creams, home remedies, and shampoos alone are not sufficient. Proper treatment requires prescribed oral antifungal medication for four to eight weeks, often combined with antifungal shampoo.

