Coal Tar Applications

Coal tar has anti-inflammatory and anti-scaling properties that are useful in treating plaque psoriasis. Crude coal tar in a soft paraffin base has been traditionally used, and tends to be a smelly, messy treatment which usually has to be made up in a hospital pharmacy.

Many modern coal tar applications are more cosmetically acceptable. Contact between coal tar products and normal skin is not usually harmful, and so it can be used for small widespread plaques, although some skin irritation can occur. The milder tar extracts can be used on the face and flexures (e.g. under the arms), but this should always be checked on the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) or with a Doctor or Pharmacist before use.

Tar products you can use in the bath or shower and tar shampoos can also be helpful. Most tar treatments can be purchased from a pharmacy without the need of a prescription; however, those who are entitled to free prescriptions can have them prescribed by a doctor. As with all topical treatments, coal tar products may have to be used for a number of weeks before the full effect is seen.

Please check the Patient Information Leaflet for each individual product for suitability and in-depth usage instructions.

Topical Coal Tar Applications

Exorex Lotion - Contains 5% coal tar solution.
Psoriderm Cream- Contains 6% coal tar solution.

Coal Tar Shampoos and Scalp Applications

Alphosyl 2 in 1 - Shampoo, alcoholic coal tar extract 5%.
Capasal - Shampoo, coal tar 1%, coconut oil 1%, salicylic acid 0.5%
Cocois - Scalp ointment, coal tar solution 12%, salicylic acid 2%, precipitated sulphur 4%, in a coconut oil emollient basis.
Polytar – Shampoo, coal tar 4%.
Psoriderm - Scalp lotion, coal tar 2.5%, lecithin 0.3%.
Sebco - Scalp ointment, coal tar solution 12%, salicylic acid 2%, precipitated sulphur 4%, in a coconut oil emollient basis.

The Psoriasis Association, Dick Coles House, Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF
Registered Charity No. 257414 and SC039886
01604 251620/ www.psoriasis-association.org.uk /mail@psoriasis-association.org.uk
T/Gel - Shampoo, coal tar extract 2%.

For further information regarding treatments for scalp psoriasis, please contact the Psoriasis Association.

Coal Tar Bath Products

Psoriderm - Bath emulsion, coal tar 40%.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidance

The NICE Guideline on the assessment and management of psoriasis makes a number of recommendations regarding the use of topical treatments to treat psoriasis. It is recommended that a review appointment is arranged four weeks after starting any new topical treatment (two weeks for children), so that your doctor can assess what the results of the treatment are so far, and to check if you need any help with using the treatment. Please see the Treatments from a GP leaflet for more information on the recommended topical treatment process.

The information in this resource is not intended to replace that of a healthcare professional: If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment, do discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist and always read the patient information leaflet to make sure you are using them correctly.

For more information, or for a list of resources included in this information sheet, please contact the Psoriasis Association.

August 2016 (Review Date: 08/17)