



## Jeff Donovan MD PhD FRCPC

*Dermatologist, specializing in hair loss*

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### INFORMATION ON DIPHENCYPRONE (DPCP)

#### What is DPCP?

- DPCP is a liquid chemical which is applied to the scalp. It is used mainly as treatment for the hair loss condition known as alopecia areata
- DPCP is used to cause irritation and an allergic response on the scalp.
- This “tricks” the immune system into mounting a response against the chemical rather than against the hair. This gives the hair a better chance to start growing back.

#### How is DPCP prescribed?

- The very first dose is usually a 2 % solution which is applied to a small coin-shaped area on the scalp. It should be covered to protect from light. The scalp can be washed at the end of the day.
- When the patient returns for the second treatment in two weeks, a very low dose of DPCP is applied (0.0005%).
- When the patient returns in one week, he or she is asked if there was any burning, itching, or irritation with the last dose. If not, the dose is increased to 0.001%.
- If there was significant itching, burning or irritation, then the dose is kept the same and perhaps even lowered
- In general, patients should be itchy for 2 days – the day of treatment and the following day. We do not want patients itchy for the rest of the week.

## **DPCP Treatment Ladder**

- The following is the treatment ladder for applying DPCP. This may vary from center to center
  - 0.0005 %
  - 0.001 %
  - 0.005 %
  - 0.01 %
  - 0.02 %
  - 0.05 %
  - 0.1 %
  - 0.2 %
  - 0.35 %
  - 0.5 %
  - 0.75 %
  - 1 %
  - 1.5 %
  - 2 %
  - 2.5 %
  - 3 %

## **Can I use DPCP with other treatments?**

- DPCP cannot be used with topical steroids. Ask Dr. Donovan if you are not sure what a topical steroid is. You might have been using this for your alopecia areata in the past, but it must now be stopped
- DPCP can be used with Minoxidil lotion –either 2 % of 5 %
- DPCP can sometimes be used with other medications Dr. Donovan will prescribe if he feels it might be beneficial

### **Who should not use DPCP?**

Dr. Donovan will not prescribe DPCP if

- You have a history of a severe reaction to it in the past

### **When will I see results if the DPCP is helping?**

- Hair growth can be seen in about 12 weeks, but can occur earlier
- If you have active alopecia areata, you may have hair loss before you get hair growth
- White colored hair may appear first followed by darker hairs

### **What side effects are possible with DPCP?**

*In general, you should think of DPCP like you would think of “poison ivy”. Any reaction you can get with poison ivy you can get with DPCP.*

- Rash on the scalp – (this is expected)
- Swollen lymph nodes (swollen glands) on the neck – this is expected and not serious
- Full body rash if the DPCP is spread
- Blisters on the scalp or body
- Pigmentation changes on the scalp – some areas lighter and some areas darker

### **What should I also know about DPCP?**

- It should not be used in pregnancy and should not be used if breast feeding

### **What side effects should prompt me to STOP DPCP and get medical advice?**

- Stop taking DPCP and get medical help if you develop hives, shortness of breath, swelling in the lips or feel unwell
- Stop if you have any concerns at all

## A NOTE ON DPCP

DPCP is quite safe when used appropriately. We have used DPCP in over 700 patients. We have used in children from age 3 to adults age 75.

1. It should be applied in a ventilated area (with window open). This medication must be kept out of the ears and eyes. This can cause significant harm if it gets in the ears or eyes
2. It must never be swallowed or once must call 911 immediately. Significant harm or even death could occur if this medication was swallowed
3. When taking the DPCP out of the bottle with the q tip, one must simply make sure it does not “drip” – it should not drip across the floor or drip across the scalp. The DPCP liquid should be contained within the cotton of the q-tip (or cotton ball that surrounds the q-tip)
4. We do not recommend that you go up on a dose of DPCP if you are travelling or if you have a big event coming up. Rarely an itchier than expected reaction can occur. Keep on the same dose until the event is over or you return from travels.
5. One should always have a topical steroid on hand in case an excessive type reaction occurs. The DPCP reaction can generally be stopped with clobetasol cream, ointment or lotion. Rarely, prednisone pills are needed to stop an exuberant DPCP reaction.
6. If you have a reaction you are worried about, email [DPCP@donovanmedical.com](mailto:DPCP@donovanmedical.com) or call the office at 604.283-9299 and leave a message on the DPCP line.
7. If in the extremely rare event you have a reaction that is unusual or you are very worried about or you develop swelling of the lips or have difficulty breathing, you must call 911 and go to the emergency room of your nearest hospital for evaluation. Please note that this would not be expected and such severe reactions have not occurred in our practice. We must emphasize though that while we will get back to you as quickly as possible via email or phone (if you email or call our office), this could take several hours. **You must call 911 and seek help if you are having an emergency.**

