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9 Best Salicylic Acid Shampoos of 2023, Tested and Reviewed

Be gone, flakes!!



BY **CORINNE SULLIVAN** PUBLISHED: OCT 14, 2023



Chances are you already know how effective salicylic acid cleansers are at clearing up your acne. But, IMO, not enough people appreciate how great salicylic acid is for your precious scalp, too. As a chemical exfoliant, **salicylic acid works to dissolve excess oil and buff away dead skin cells** before they flake off, making it a safe (and v effective) clarifying treatment for your scalp—especially if you're someone who's trying to get rid of dandruff. Ready to give a salicylic acid shampoo a try? You've come to the right place, my friend.

As dermatologist Marisa Garshick, MD, previously told Cosmo, "Those with dandruff should consider treatments containing exfoliating ingredients, like salicylic acid," which checks out, seeing as dandruff is triggered by excess oil on your scalp. However! Those with dry, itchy scalps will also <3 shampoos with salicylic acid since **the powerhouse BHA helps to slough off dead skin and open up your pores**, allowing for increased hydration. Love a double-duty product!! Now, let's get into my fave salicylic acid shampoos, shall we?

Our top picks for the best salicylic acid shampoos of 2023:

BEST OVERALL SALICYLIC ACID SHAMPOO

1



Briogeo Scalp Revival MegaStrength+ Dandruff Relief Shampoo

\$42 AT AMAZON

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2



BEST SALICYLIC ACID SHAMPOO FOR DANDRUFF

Sachajuan Scalp Shampoo

\$28 AT AMAZON

[read more](#)

BEST GENTLE SALICYLIC ACID SHAMPOO

3



SheaMoisture Apple Cider Vinegar Anti-Dandruff Shampoo

\$12 AT AMAZON

[read more](#)

4



BEST CLARIFYING SALICYLIC ACID SHAMPOO

Shu Uemura Delicate Comfort Deep Cleanser

\$59 AT SEPHORA

[read more](#)

5



BEST BUDGET SALICYLIC ACID SHAMPOO

Avalon Organics Therapy Medicated Anti-Dandruff Shampoo

\$9 AT AMAZON

[read more](#)

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Ahead, check out the full list of salicylic acid shampoos for every hair type, along with expert information on how salicylic acid shampoo works and how to choose the best one for your hair.

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1

Best Overall Salicylic Acid Shampoo

Briogeo Scalp Revival MegaStrength+ Dandruff Relief Shampoo



\$42 AT AMAZON

\$42 AT DERMSTORE

\$42 AT ULTA BEAUTY

PROS

- ⊕ Gently exfoliates scalp to help eliminate flakes

CONS

- ⊗ Some found it a bit too drying

Yep, it's pricey. But for those with dandruff, or seborrheic dermatitis, this shampoo could be worth the investment. It **uses the chemical exfoliants salicylic acid and lactic acid—along with soothing tea tree oil**—to help relieve itching, flaking, and irritation, all while fighting oil-causing bacteria. Oh, and since it relies on milder, naturally-derived surfactants, many testers found that it's gentle enough for everyday use.

- **Size:** 8.4 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** Yes

One tester writes: "This shampoo is amazing for dry scalp flakes. I had tried numerous dandruff shampoos with no success. I have curly hair, so I make sure to use a deep conditioner after each use because it does leave hair feeling dry, but it's flake-free, so beyond worth it."

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2

Best Salicylic Acid Shampoo for Dandruff

Sachajuan Scalp Shampoo



Now 12% Off

\$28 AT AMAZON

\$32 AT DERMSTORE

\$32 AT SKINSTORE

<u>PROS</u> ⊕ Uses antifungal ingredients to clear up dandruff	<u>CONS</u> ⊗ Contains sodium laureth sulfate (SLES), which can be a bit drying
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Listen, salicylic acid is great and all, but a super-oily scalp may need something a lil more potent to take on flakes. Enter: this powerful formula, which looks chic but means serious business. This one **contains two dandruff-fighting super stars—climbazole and piroctone olamine—to control flaking**, while rosemary oil and menthol providing a soothing, cooling sensation.

- **Size:** 8.4 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** No

One reviewer notes: "I can't remember how I stumbled upon this product, but about a year ago I had the worst dandruff I've ever had. Within a few days [of using this], it started getting better. My sister recommended I use the Aussie 3-Minute Miracle for conditioner as well, and between those two, I have not had any dandruff in a year."

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3

Best Gentle Salicylic Acid Shampoo

SheaMoisture Apple Cider Vinegar Anti-Dandruff Shampoo



Now 11% Off

\$12 AT AMAZON

\$13 AT WALMART

\$15 AT ULTA BEAUTY

PROS

- ⊕ Formulated with skin-loving ingredients and mild surfactants

CONS

- ⊗ Testers say it works best on milder cases of dandruff

Lots of dandruff shampoos out there can strip your strands and leave your ends feeling like straw—but IMO, this gentle formula is an exception. Filled with skin-soothing agents like glycerin, coconut oil, shea butter, and niacinamide, this one **works to nurture your scalp and create a healthy foundation**—and since it relies on milder, naturally-derived surfactants, it's gentle on hair, too.

- **Size:** 13 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** Yes

According to one reviewer: "I've been struggling with itchy scalp for a while. I heard about apple cider vinegar shampoo but never thought about it helping with itch. My scalp feels so clean and the itch is gone!!! I've been embracing my natural curls/waves and this shampoo definitely helps by keeping my scalp and hair clean. I will never be without this again!"

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4

Best Clarifying Salicylic Acid Shampoo

Shu Uemura Delicate Comfort Deep Cleanser



\$59 AT SEPHORA

\$59 AT SHU UEMURA

PROS

- ⊕ Provides a very thorough yet still gentle cleanse

CONS

- ⊗ May not be the best fit for those with dry scalps or hair

Despite what you may have heard, sulfate shampoos aren't *always* bad news...especially if you're someone with oily hair that's prone to buildup (hi, it's me). Though it's 100 percent not cheap, this clarifying formula **uses sodium laureth sulfate (SLES), a slightly gentler, less-stripping sulfate**, to give you a super-clean scalp feeling. It also includes salicylic acid and citric acid to break down buildup and glycerin to restore moisture.

- **Size:** 13.4 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** No

One reviewer writes: "I do love how clean this will make my scalp feel on wash day! I wash my hair every 4 days or so, and by the 4th day, the oils in my scalp are very shiny and make my hair feel so thick. After washing my hair, it feels so clean [and] lightweight, and this doesn't dry out my scalp."

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5

Best Budget Salicylic Acid Shampoo

Avalon Organics Therapy Medicated Anti-Dandruff Shampoo

on sale



Now 20% Off

\$9 AT AMAZON

\$15 AT WALMART

PROS

CONS



Includes soothing anti-inflammatory ingredients



Contains SCS, so can be a bit drying

Tbh, organic dandruff shampoos don't always deliver, but this formula actually contains 2 percent salicylic acid to chemically buff away flakes and dead skin. It also **incorporates a mix of plant extracts, like soothing aloe vera and anti-inflammatory tea tree oil**, to help relieve some of the inflammation that comes with dandruff, and though it does contain sodium coco-sulfate (SCS), this kind of sulfate tends to have a much lower rate of irritation than an SLS like sodium lauryl sulfate.

- **Size:** 14 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** No

One reviewer writes: "This shampoo has changed my hair for the better. I went from a constantly itchy, dandruffy scalp to normal, shiny hair. I use it about every 2-3 days (showering with no shampoo in between), and my hair has never looked & felt better. Couple it with a good conditioner for the ends of your hair and you will be in business."

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Best Hydrating Salicylic Acid Shampoo

Straand Crown Cleanse Shampoo



\$26 AT AMAZON

\$24 AT STRAAND

\$24 AT URBAN OUTFITTERS

PROS

- ⊕ Works to soothe irritated scalps, per testers

CONS

- ⊗ Peppermint smell isn't for everyone

Healthy hair starts with a strong scalp skin barrier, and this bb is here to get right to the root of the issue. Made with dry, irritated scalps in mind, Straand's clarifying shampoo is packed with nourishing panthenol and powerful rosebay extract, which **helps to soothe irritation and stabilize sebum production** so your precious lil follicles can thrive.

- **Size:** 11.8 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** Yes* (*but still contains strong, sulfate-free cleansers that can be a bit drying)

One reviewer writes: "I suffer from scalp psoriasis due to certain ingredients in hair products. This shampoo works amazing for cleansing my scalp. I can literally feel it soothing my scalp. It works into a rich lather, and it doesn't make my hair feel dried out."

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7

Best Drugstore Salicylic Acid Shampoo

Neutrogena T/Sal Therapeutic Shampoo

on sale




Now 30% Off

\$7 AT AMAZON

\$7 AT WALMART

PROS

CONS

 Approved by reviewers with sensitive skin Def has a bit of a medicinal smell

Okay, listen. I know this bottle ain't cute. But this stuff *really* delivers, promise. Made with 3 percent salicylic acid, this no-frills drugstore shampoo **works to detoxify the scalp without leaving it stripped**—and since it's free from silicones, sulfates, or added fragrance, reviewers say it's a safe choice for folks with sensitive skin.

- **Size:** 4.5 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** Yes* (*but still contains strong, sulfate-free cleansers that can be a bit drying)

One review notes: "I've used so many shampoos, and this is the best one so far. This shampoo has really helped with my oily hair, and it has decreased the amount of dandruff in my hair significantly. I have fine, textured hair, and I use this to wash to my hair about 4 times a week. The smell is a little funny, but it's not unbearable."

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8

Best Salicylic Acid Shampoo for Itchy Scalps

Ouai Anti-Dandruff Shampoo



\$36 AT AMAZON

\$36 AT ULTA BEAUTY

\$36 AT SEPHORA

PROS

- ⊕ Helps to leave hair soft and smelling incredible

CONS

- ⊗ Requires consistent use to see results

Got an itchy scalp? The last thing ya wanna do is further aggravate it with a harsh cleanser. Instead, try sudsing up with this sulfate-free formula from Oaui, which **relies on a combo of salicylic acid and citric acid to gently break down buildup**, as well as lightweight glycerin to hydrate strands. Oh, and unlike a lot of dandruff shampoos, it legit smells *divine*.

- **Size:** 10 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** Yes* (*but still contains strong, sulfate-free cleansers that can be a bit drying)

One tester writes: "I love this shampoo! Makes my hair so soft, and I've only used it twice, and I can already tell my dandruff is getting better. Little pricey, but it's worth it, since it actually works. I love the smell, too!"

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9

Best Salicylic Acid Shampoo for Dry Scalps

Oribe Serene Scalp Anti-Dandruff Shampoo

on sale



Now 12% Off

\$46 AT AMAZON

\$52 AT DERMSTORE

\$52 AT SEPHORA

PROS

- ⊕ Includes ingredients that help hydrate and strengthen hair

CONS

- ⊗ Def not the cheapest option

It's a splurge, but this bb is worth the investment if your scalp is in need of some TLC, 'cause even though dandruff is triggered by excess oil, you **can** have both dandruff *and* a dry scalp (fun!!). Complete with a pretty pearlescent bottle, this gentle treatment **revives parched scalps with panthenol and niacinamide**, all while the 2 percent salicylic acid tackles flakes and hydrolyzed quinoa relieves itch.

- **Size:** 8.5 fl oz
- **Sulfate-free?** Yes* (*but still contains strong, sulfate-free cleansers that can be a bit drying)

One reviewer writes: "I have terrible dry scalp, to the point I will make scabs on my scalp...(EW I KNOW). This shampoo and conditioner IS THE BEST. LIFE SAVING! Like, nothing else works. I've tried the dermatologist and got shampoos and steroids and nothing helps! But this stuff...idk how, but [it] keeps my scalp so moisturized! 10/10."

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