

PATIENT HANDOUT. Please feel free to copy this page

Androgenetic Alopecia (a-low-pee-sha)

Androgenetic alopecia refers to slowly progressive hair thinning that may have an inherited basis in some patients. It can be inherited from both sides of your family and may even skip a generation.

This condition is the most common form of hair loss in both men and women. By age 70, about 80% of men will have androgenetic alopecia; up to 40% of women older than age 70 will have it. This condition may start as early as the teenage years.

The hair thinning occurs in either a typical male or female pattern on the head (see below). In some people, androgenetic alopecia can affect the entire scalp or even the entire body, although this is uncommon (1 in 100,000 people).

Male Pattern

Most men experience hair loss at the temples and top of the head; some will slowly develop more extensive hair loss that involves the entire front, middle and top of the head. The back of the scalp is usually not involved.

Female Pattern

Women usually experience hair thinning in the middle or top of the scalp and sometimes sides of the head, too. One of the earliest signs is a widening of the 'central part' that runs down the middle of the scalp.

Treatment

There are certain medications that may help some of your hair grow back and/or stop more from falling out.

- Minoxidil is a treatment applied to the scalp and is available as a solution or foam.
- Men should use 2 or 5% solution or ½ cap of foam once or twice a day.
- Women should use the 2% solution or ½ cap of foam once a day.
- Finasteride is a pill taken by mouth once a day. It is only recommended for men.
- Combining minoxidil and finasteride has been found to be more effective in men than either medication alone.

Other, more expensive treatments for androgenetic alopecia include:

- Low level laser therapy: using a device that emits a red light to promote hair growth.
- Scalp injections with plasma.
- Hair transplantation surgery: scalp hair and follicles are moved from an area with lots of hair to an area with thinning hair or baldness. Several surgeries over time are usually needed to get the desired hair coverage.

Alternatively, you may choose to use products like hair fibres and sprays, or a wig or hairpiece. Contrary to what some people think, wigs do not harm your hair and do not speed up the thinning process.

Sources: 1) Male Pattern Balding; Female Pattern Balding. Canadian Hair Loss Foundation. <http://www.canadianhairlossfoundation.org/>; **2)** Hair Loss. HealthLink BC. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/aa151672>

