

Hair Loss

Each person has specific toxic exposures along with dietary and genetic weaknesses that are causing their symptoms. Toxic exposures can be inorganic like heavy metals, DDT, VOC's, Radio-active waste and any other chemical like food additives or pesticides and fertilizers sprayed on the foods. They can also be organic or living organisms like parasites, bacteria, viruses, or fungi. All the different possible combinations make it difficult to accurately address issues unless you have experienced medical professionals mapping through all your different clinical symptoms.

Dr. Marilyn Tucker founded The Vibrant Health Community to do Symptom Mapping to be able to bring a completely personalized plan for each person. When you join the Vibrant Health Community you have your own medical team of doctor, pharmacist and health coach. This Team specializes in Integrative-Complementary Medicine. They will work with your personal physician to bring you to a place of as much natural healing as your body will allow. For those of you that have health issues that require prescription medications, your Team can help introduce natural measures that can reduce the imbalances and complications that inevitably come with prescription medication. This can reduce side effects and possible additional drugs having to be introduced.

Definition

Partial or complete loss of hair is called alopecia.

Alternative Names

Loss of hair; Alopecia; Baldness

Considerations

Hair loss usually develops gradually and may be patchy or diffuse (all over). Roughly 100 hairs are lost from your head every day. The average scalp contains about 100,000 hairs.

Each individual hair survives for an average of 4-1/2 years, during which time it grows about half an inch a month. Usually in its 5th year, the hair falls out and is replaced within 6 months by a new one. Genetic baldness is caused by the body's failure to produce new hairs and not by excessive hair loss.

Both men and women tend to lose hair thickness and amount as they age. Inherited or "pattern baldness" affects many more men than women. About 25% of men begin to bald by the time they are 30 years old, and about two-thirds are either bald or have a balding pattern by age 60.

Typical male pattern baldness involves a receding hairline and thinning around the crown with eventual bald spots. Ultimately, you may have only a horseshoe ring of hair around the sides. In addition to genes, male-pattern baldness seems to require the presence of the male hormone testosterone. Men who do not produce testosterone (because of genetic abnormalities or castration) do not develop this pattern of baldness.

Some women also develop a particular pattern of hair loss due to genetics, age, and male hormones that tend to increase in women after menopause. The pattern is different from that of men. Female pattern baldness involves a thinning throughout the scalp while the frontal hairline generally remains intact.

Common Causes

Baldness is not usually caused by a disease, but is related to aging, heredity, and testosterone. In addition to the common male and female patterns from a combination of these factors, other possible causes of hair loss, especially if in an unusual pattern, include:

- Alopecia areata -- bald patches that develop on the scalp, beard, and, possibly, eyebrows. Eyelashes may fall out as well.
- Autoimmune conditions such as lupus
- Burns
- Certain infectious diseases such as syphilis
- Chemotherapy
- Emotional or physical stress

- Excessive shampooing and blow-drying
- Fever
- Hormonal changes -- for example, thyroid disease, childbirth, or use of birth control pills
- Nervous habits such as continual hair pulling or scalp rubbing
- Radiation therapy
- Tinea capitis (ringworm of the scalp)
- Tumor of the ovary or adrenal glands

Home Care

Hair loss from menopause or childbirth often returns to normal 6 months to 2 years later.

For hair loss caused by illness (such as fever), radiation therapy, or medication use, no treatment is necessary. The hair will usually grow back when the illness has ended or the therapy is finished. A wig, hat, or other covering may be desired until the hair grows back.

For hair loss due to heredity, age, and hormones, the topical medication Rogaine (minoxidil) can be helpful for both male and female pattern baldness. Expect to wait 6 months before you see results. The oral medication Propecia (finasteride) is effective in some men. This medicine can decrease sex drive. When either medication is stopped, the former baldness pattern returns.

Tests that may be performed (but are rarely needed) include:

- Microscopic examination of a plucked hair
- Skin biopsy (if skin changes are present)

Ringworm on the scalp may require the use of an oral drug, such as griseofulvin, because creams and lotions applied to the affected area may not get into the hair follicles to kill the fungus.

Treatment of alopecia areata may require topical or injectable steroids or ultraviolet light.

References

Habif TP. *Clinical Dermatology*. 4th ed. St. Louis, Mo: Mosby; 2004:844-845.

Rakel P. *Conn's Current Therapy 2005*. 57th ed. Philadelphia, Pa: WB Saunders; 2005: 897.