Hair Loss (Alopecia)

What is Alopecia?

People who have alopecia may also experience a softening of the fingernails and the loss of eyebrows and eyelashes, which can cause discomfort from rain and dust.

There are several different types of alopecia. The most common are as follows:

- **Androgenetic Alopecia** – this is more commonly known as male or female pattern baldness. It is a thinning of the hair to an almost transparent state, and can occur in men or women. It is thought to be a hereditary form of hair loss.
- **Alopecia Areata** – this is when hair loss occurs in patches anywhere on the body. It affects one in every one hundred people.
- **Alopecia Totalis** – this is the total loss of hair from the scalp.
- **Alopecia Universalis** – is the total loss of all hair on the body.

No one knows exactly what causes alopecia. It is sometimes hereditary or it can be caused by both physical and mental distress. Alopecia is an autoimmune disease, which means that the body's white blood cells, which usually defend the body against infection, wrongly attack the hair follicles, preventing growth of new hair. However, the potential for hair to regrow is always there, as the follicles remain intact.

Treatment

Alopecia is a very unpredictable condition, and hair may grow back or fall out no matter what treatments are used. Many people prefer not to treat the condition but to see how it develops naturally. However, there are a number of treatments that may have a limited benefit for some people. These include steroid injections into the scalp, the application of minoxidil solution, or irritant creams. These treatments work by causing an allergic reaction, which diverts the white blood cells from the hair follicles. However, there is limited evidence that these treatments have any long term benefit, particularly for the more serious forms of alopecia. Many people learn to live with the disorder.

It is important to remember that hair loss happens to a lot of people as they get older and there is no need to be embarrassed or depressed about it. If hair loss is making you worried or unhappy you can see your GP or ask to see a dermatologist. Your local pharmacist may have some useful advice for you as well.

NHS.UK website provides information on hair loss and treatment.

Useful Organisations

The following organisations can provide information and advice on coping with alopecia.

Alopecia UK provide information, advice and support for people with experience of alopecia. There are support groups, discussion forums and tips on coping with hair loss.

Last updated: August 20, 2020

Useful Organisations

Alopecia UK

Email: info@alopecia.org.uk

Website: www.alopecia.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 101 7025

Address: Alopecia UK , BD18 9EH

Related Articles

Being diagnosed

Your Doctor or GP

Introduction to Complementary Therapies

Depression

Anxiety and stress