



Alopecia Totalis

Alopecia totalis is an auto-immune disorder which results in the total loss of hair, but only on the scalp. Alopecia totalis is somewhat of an intermediary condition between Alopecia Areata which is patchy scalp hair loss, and Alopecia Universalis which extends to total body hair loss. Stress is thought to be a contributor in alopecia areata. However, many with the disorder lead relatively low stress lives.

Types of disorder

Alopecia Totalis is one of a group of three main conditions. Those three are Alopecia Areata, Alopecia Universalis, and of course Alopecia Totalis.

Alopecia totalis usually appears in two types:

- One being a fairly sudden and complete loss of all head hair.
- The other being a slower form which originates as Alopecia Areata (patchy loss) and advances to complete scalp hair loss. In this sense it is sometimes tied to Alopecia Areata (patchy loss), but not all the time.

Most sufferers are children and young adults under the age of 40, though it can affect people of all ages. It can also affect the the nails, giving them a ridged, pitted or brittle appearance. According to statistics, 2% of men and 1% of women in western society suffer from some form of Alopecia Areata. About 2% of those have Totalis or Universalis. This means that about 1 in every 125,000 men and 1 in every 250,000 women have Alopecia Totalis or Universalis.

Causes of Alopecia Totalis

This condition comes about as a result of an autoimmune disorder which causes your immune system to attack your hair follicles. In most cases there is small chance of hair recovery, however there have been cases of complete restoration as well. Consider it a genetic auto immune condition that has an unknown trigger, and which can sometimes be "un-triggered" for unknown reasons. They are still researching why hair follicles are the target of the autoimmune activities.

Treatments for Alopecia Totalis

The main treatment for Alopecia Totalis are therapies which focus on immunomodulation, such as glucocorticoid injections, anthralin, or glucocorticoids taken orally. It is heard that years of steroid therapy can put the condition into remission. Years of steroid therapy is not always enjoyable however, as there are side effects. It is important to comment that Rogaine (Minoxidil) is not effective for those with Alopecia Totalis. Some treatments which have been considered include Methotrexate, a treatment for autoimmune disorders, and corticosteroids have been proposed as treatments.

The Study

In a study including 84 patients, regrowth on treated areas was present in 92% of patients with patchy alopecia areata and 61% of patients with alopecia totalis. Regrowth persisted 3 months after treatment in 71% of patients with patchy alopecia areata and 28% of patients with alopecia totalis. Regrowth usually is seen within 4-6 weeks in responsive patients. Patients with rapidly progressive, extensive, or long-standing alopecia areata tend to respond poorly.

The Good News

The comforting news is that alopecia totalis is not a painful disease and does not make people feel sick. It is not contagious, and people who have the disease are usually otherwise healthy. It has no effect on life expectancy, and will not interfere with your ability to pursue a normal lifestyle.

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