

# About Alopecia Areata



## What is Alopecia Areata?<sup>1-3</sup>



Alopecia areata is a disease in which your immune system attacks your hair follicles at the root and causes hair to fall out. Hair follicles are the structures in your skin that form hair.

Hair loss can occur on the:

- Scalp
- Face (eyebrows, eyelashes, nose hair, beard)
- Other parts of the body



The pattern of hair loss and how it grows back can be hard to predict. Some people may only lose their hair one time, while others may have hair loss and regrowth many times during their life. For some, hair may regrow without treatment. Most people with alopecia areata are usually in good health and have no other symptoms.

## What Causes Alopecia Areata and Who Gets It?



Alopecia areata is an autoimmune disease, but the exact cause is unknown. It's believed that genetic and environmental factors play a role. Anyone of any age can develop alopecia areata.<sup>1</sup>



### Alopecia areata by the numbers:<sup>3</sup>

You're not alone. Many people are living with alopecia areata.

- It's estimated that 700,000 people in the U.S. have some form of the disease
- More than 80 percent of patients show signs of alopecia areata by age 40
- Nearly 6.7 million people in the U.S. may be diagnosed with the disease during their lifetimes

## Who is at Risk of Getting Alopecia Areata?



Factors that may increase a person's risk of alopecia areata include:<sup>1,4</sup>

- Having a parent or close family member with alopecia areata
- Having certain autoimmune diseases such as psoriasis, thyroid disease or vitiligo (a disorder that causes areas of the skin to lose color)

## What are the Signs and Symptoms of Alopecia Areata?<sup>1,5</sup>



The two main symptoms of alopecia areata are:

- Hair loss
- Weakness or denting of the nails

Other things you may notice include:<sup>1,7</sup>

- Tingling, itching, or burning on the skin right before the hair falls out
- Burning or itching in the places where you lost hair
- Gray or white hairs in the places where most of the hair is gone
- Short, broken hairs around the edges of a patch that are narrower at their base than at their tips
- More hair loss during the colder winter months and less hair loss during the warmer months



If your hair loss includes your eyebrows, eyelashes, nose, and other parts of your body, you may also experience:<sup>6,7</sup>

- Irritated eyes due to sweat, water, or dust getting in them
- A frequent runny nose and sneezing
- Skin that's sensitive to temperature and sunburn

## Types of Alopecia Areata



There are three main types of alopecia areata.<sup>2</sup>

**Patchy alopecia areata.** Hair loss with small, round bald spots on the scalp. This is the most common type.

**Alopecia totalis.** Total hair loss on the whole scalp, leaving the person bald.

**Alopecia universalis.** Total hair loss on the whole body. This type is rare.



If you have alopecia areata, it's important to see a dermatologist. They are experts in treating conditions of the hair, skin, and nails. A dermatologist will also talk with you about how alopecia areata is affecting you and what treatments may help regrow hair.<sup>1,8</sup>

## How Alopecia Areata is Diagnosed<sup>1</sup>



To diagnose alopecia areata, your doctor will examine:

- Areas on your body where you've lost hair
- Your nails
- Your hair and hair follicle openings using a handheld magnifying tool

Your doctor may also:

- Ask about your medical and family history of alopecia areata
- Order blood tests or a skin biopsy (a sample of skin to be examined under a microscope) to determine if your hair loss is caused by another condition

Hair loss can be a deeply personal experience and it may be hard to talk about it with others. Sharing your feelings with a support system and a dermatologist can help you manage the disease's impact on your everyday life.<sup>9</sup>

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