

Baldness is the loss of hair anywhere on the body, usually on the scalp region. It is usually hereditary and affects men. However females can be affected by baldness also.

What to look for

- thinning of hair in general, however, each hair strand becomes thinner and shorter until the roots produce nothing but fine down.
- thinning of hair in temple region or on the top of the head usually signals male pattern baldness.
- a patch of skin may suddenly become visible anywhere on the scalp as the hair has fallen out. It may be as small as 1cm across or it can be 10-15 cm in diameter. This condition is quite rare and can affect both men and women.
- patches of hair can fall out anywhere on the body in either men or women
- the person may wake up to find tufts of hair on their pillow or the loss can be more gradual
- hair may fall out after it is coloured or bleached or you may notice it falling after the hair has been pulled back in tight pony tails or braided or even frequent tugging at it can cause it to fall out.
- Also see Hair Loss.

Causes

Male-pattern baldness is caused by hereditary factors. It is usually inherited from the mother's side of the family and involves the presence of an active form of testosterone to set off the gene-programmed balding process. Men whose mother's fathers became bald early in life are very likely to follow a similar pattern. Hereditary hair loss is usually gradual and permanent, beginning with a thinning of the hair at the temples and or on the crown as early as in the teenage years.

Women can experience a natural thinning of the hair after menopause because of changing hormonal levels. Women who have just had a baby can also experience thinning hair or hair loss in patches. Hormonal change in this instance is temporary and will be replaced with new hair in just a few months.

Other factors which can contribute to the loss of hair are scalp infections and persistent dandruff, poor diet, stress and sluggish circulation.

Alopecia Areata describes the condition whereby hair falls out in clumps all over the head and body. This is usually to do with emotional stress. The hair usually returns after the stress has gone away in a few weeks or months. However, despite research, there is no clear indication as to how this condition arises. It also may occur in people with certain disorders such as pernicious anaemia or diabetes. If large areas are involved and all the hair on the head is lost, this is called alopecia totalis. If the person loses all body hair as well it is called alopecia universalis. In both these conditions, regrowth is not likely.

The medical profession are still unsure what exactly causes some types of baldness

Traditional Treatment

There is no satisfactory treatment for alopecia areata. If the areas are small, a doctor may try injecting the areas with small amounts of steroid drugs to try to trigger regrowth, but this is seldom successful.

The most common way of treating baldness has been by disguising it through the use of wigs, toupees and hair-pieces. They can be made to measure and fitted carefully.

Hair transplantation is another possible solution, although the end result does not always look natural.

A drug is available which has been found to promote hair growth on previously bald areas. This drug appears to be successful and is called minoxidil. It's retail name is Regaine and is available on prescription. It is available also as a lotion formulation to be applied onto the scalp. It must however, be used every day to maintain the growth of hair.

Alternative/Natural Treatment

Body Work - Scalp Massage is often successful in increasing the circulation to the hair follicles. This can be performed with the essential oil of Rosemary 5 drops diluted in 15 ml of a carrier oil (preferably jojoba).

Herbal Treatments - Rinse your hair with tea made from sage and/or rosemary.

Chinese Herbal Treatments - Chinese medical practitioners believe the hair is nourished by the kidneys and the liver. These organs need to be functioning properly in order for the hair to grow properly. They recommend - Polygonum, lycium fruit, Chinese foxglove root, Chinese yam and cornus.

Meditation and relaxation techniques to decrease stress levels can be helpful

Personal Care

Treating the hair with care, loosening tight pony tails, and other hair styles which may pull the hair out. As well as not damaging hair with bleach and other strong chemicals.

Creating a stress free environment; learning how to control stress in your life.

Dietary Considerations

- Supplements such as the B Complex, Zinc, Silica, Chelated Multi Vitamins, Brewers Yeast, Kelp