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## DID YOU KNOW?

Alopecia areata is known as a “polygenic disease.” This means, unlike a single-gene disease, both parents must contribute a number of specific genes in order for a child to develop it.



Currently, there is no cure for alopecia. But the good news is, even when the disease is active, your hair follicles remain alive. This means there is a chance your hair can grow back again – even after a long period of time.



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# ALOPECIA AREATA

Alopecia areata is a common autoimmune skin disease, causing hair loss on the scalp, face and sometimes on other areas of the body. Every case of alopecia areata is unique. The extent of hair loss varies from patient to patient, ranging from a few spots to total hair loss. Depending on the severity of the disease, hair loss and regrowth may be unpredictable and cyclical (happens over and over) for many years.

## WHO GETS ALOPECIA AREATA?

People of all ages, both sexes and all ethnicity groups can develop alopecia areata; however, your chances are slightly greater if a relative has the disease. It also occurs more often among people who have family members with autoimmune disorders such as diabetes, lupus, or thyroid disease.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Patchy hair loss often begins with one or more coin-sized round, smooth, bare patches where hair once was. Hair loss occurs mostly on the scalp, but can occur at any hair-bearing site – eyebrows, eyelashes, beards.
- Significant hair loss in a very short period of time.
- Hair loss that is mostly on one side of the scalp, instead of both sides.
- “Exclamation point” hairs that are narrow at the base of the scalp.
- “Stippling” or “pitting” (rows of tiny dents) on the fingernails.

## CAN ALOPECIA AREATA BE CURED?

There is no cure for alopecia areata, but hair can often regrow on its own. Hair regrowth varies from patient to patient; for some, the disease never returns. Others lose and regrow hair for many years. There are some treatment options that are effective in stimulating hair growth including:

1. Corticosteroids: This medication suppresses the immune system. It can be given as an injection into places with hair loss, orally (a pill), or topical ointment, cream or foam (applied to the skin). Response to therapy may be gradual.
2. Other drugs that are used for alopecia areata with varying degrees of effectiveness include medications used to treat psoriasis and topical sensitizers (drugs that are applied to the skin and cause an allergic reaction can cause hair growth).

## OTHER TIPS

Apart from drug treatments, there are various cosmetic and protective techniques that people with alopecia areata can try. These include:

1. Style your hair to cover bald spots.
2. Consider using makeup, such as an eyebrow pencil, to hide/minimize hair loss.
3. Wearing coverings (wigs, hats, or scarves) offer protection from the elements and does not interfere with hair re-growth.
4. While the disease is not medically serious, it can impact people psychologically. Often, the emotional aspects can be the most difficult. Consider joining a support group; you can find great resources at National Alopecia Areata Foundation (NAAF) website, [www.naaf.org](http://www.naaf.org).

<https://www.naaf.org/alopecia-areata>  
<https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/hair-and-scalp-problems/alopecia-areata#treatment>