

Hair Loss Sources

Hair loss is a heartbreaking reality for many men, and women. While generally associated with age, hair loss can be caused by many different factors. Some of these conditions are treatable or even reversible.

Unlike male pattern baldness, hair loss can be a symptom of a particular disease, and can even be caused by stress. Hair loss is often the first and only presentation of many diseases and the hair generally grows back when the disease is gone or the patient is undergoing adequate treatment. Addison's disease, Hyperthyroidism, Hypothyroidism, Iron Deficiency Scarring, Seborrheic Dermatitis, Secondary Syphilis, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus and Vitiligo are all common diseases that are associated with hair loss.

Aside from disease, and male pattern baldness, there are other sources of hair loss:

Traction alopecia

This type of hair loss experienced by people who knot or braid their hair tightly. It is a type of hair loss due to chronic and excessive pulling on the hair.

Trichotillomania

This term refers to the intentional pulling out of healthy hair. It is usually a personal habit that causes temporary hair loss and has no permanent consequence. This condition is sometimes viewed as a symptom of serious emotional or psychiatric problem in both children and adults. Usually the person will pull individual strands of hair from his or her head, although eyelashes, eyebrows and pubic hair may also be involved. There is often a sort of ritual involved, such as twisting the hair around a finger before pulling it from the head.

Alopecia areata

People who develop patches of baldness may have this condition. It's quite common, affecting one in every one hundred US citizens. The hair loss occurs in small circular areas on the scalp and it is believed to be autoimmune, meaning the body's cells and antibodies attack themselves. This condition usually occurs in young adults and affects American men and women equally. In Italy and Spain, however, it occurs more frequently in men. Approximately 80% of patients with this type of alopecia will have hair re-growth eventually, although many will face recurrent battles with this disease.

Alopecia totalis

A more severe form of alopecia areata involving complete loss of scalp hair, and sometimes resulting in a total loss of body hair (alopecia universalis). This is a rare problem and approximately one third of patients will grow back all their hair within a year. Again, patients may find themselves battling this disease again and again.

Chemical damage

Telogen effluvium alopecia and anagen effluvium are forms of hair loss that initially cause patchy areas of lost hair, and then eventually leading to a complete loss of hair. This type of hair loss differs from the others in that instead of the hair follicle simply shutting down, certain chemicals actually kill the anagen hair and hair follicles.

Medications

Some medications, including chemotherapy, can cause this condition. Chemotherapy is a drug injected into the body to kill cancerous cells, but it is also a poison that will kill good cells including hair follicles. However, when the chemotherapy stops, the hair usually grows back after about six months. There are other medications used to treat illness and disease that can also cause hair loss. Not all patients may experience hair loss, and the reasons for the hair loss are not always fully understood. It's important to discuss possible side effects with your doctor before taking any medication, and consult with your doctor before discontinuing a treatment as well.

Hair loss is not uncommon, nor is it untreatable. If you are suffering from hair loss, see your doctor to rule out any underlying medical conditions. There may be treatment options available to help your hair loss make a quick and full recovery.