

Shaving Your Head

Many people – men and women—with moderate alopecia areata contemplate shaving their head. Some people find that shaving can feel empowering as a way to take control of hair loss on your terms. Deciding to shave your head, whatever the reason, is a personal choice.

If you are nervous or feeling anxious about your first shave, ask a trusted friend or family member to help you. They can also help shave the difficult-to-see or hard-to-reach sections until you get the hang of it.

Lastly, if you've made the choice to shave your head, decide if you want to use a manual razor (extremely close shave) or an electric shaver (faster, safer but not as close a shave as with a manual razor). It all comes down to personal preference.



Tools You'll Need for Shaving

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Clippers (electric or battery operated)
- Razor or electric shaver
- Shaving cream or shaving gel
- Astringent or toner, like witchhazel
- Moisturizing lotion
- Towel
- Water source
- Large mirror and handheld mirror (for seeing the back of your head)
- Sunscreen (if keeping your head exposed)

Steps for Shaving with a Blade

- 1 Trim.** Clip your hair down to the lowest setting on the clippers. This makes it easier to follow up with a manual blade/razor.
- 2 Rinse.** Use warm water to remove any remaining loose hairs and soften what you are about to shave.
- 3 Apply shave cream.** Apply to one section or quadrant of the head at a time and rub it into the scalp.
- 4 Use the blade.** If this is your first time, you will want to shave “with the grain,” which means shaving in the direction your hair grows from top to bottom, and will minimize bumps on the scalp after shaving. (Once your scalp is used to the shave, you can then start to shave “against the grain”. This will give you a very smooth, close shave.) Starting on the right front, shave down in long, smooth strokes. Use enough pressure to make sure the blade is shaving. Start back on top and make another long smooth parallel stroke, slightly overlapping the first stroke. Repeat this process until you’ve shaved all four quadrants of the scalp.
- 5 Finish.** Check for areas that need to be touched up. Rinse with cold water to help close the pores. Follow up with an astringent or toner (apply with a cotton ball). Finish off with a moisturizing lotion (look for one labeled non-comedogenic, meaning it will not clog pores) and sunscreen if needed.

Steps for Shaving with an Electric Shaver

- 1 Trim.** If needed, trim as close as you can to the scalp (see Step 1 above.)
- 2 Prepare the scalp.** Warm water or a light pre-shave lotion can help reduce the friction of shaving and protect the scalp.
- 3 Begin shaving.** Start with the back and sides, then move to the top and front, feeling the scalp with your free hand to see if any spots need to be touched up.
- 4 Finish and clean.** Finish off by applying a light moisturizer and sunscreen if needed. Always remember to clean off the electric blades with a brush to remove hair before the next shave.

Choosing to shave your head when you’re living with alopecia areata is a deeply personal decision. There is no “right” choice—only the one that makes you feel most like yourself. Shaving your head can simply mean you’ve decided to meet alopecia areata on your own terms, and there’s tremendous courage and beauty in that.