Understanding Alopecia Areata

What a New Diagnosis Means

National Alopecia Areata Foundation®

What is Alopecia Areata?

Alopecia areata is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes the immune system to attack hair follicles, leading to unpredictable hair loss. It affects nearly 7 million people in the United States. Hair loss may occur on the scalp, eyebrows, eyelashes, face, or other parts of the body. Some people also notice small dents in their fingernails.

You Are Not Alone

While there is currently no cure, effective treatments are available for many people, and you don't have to navigate this diagnosis alone.

What to Expect

Alopecia areata looks different for everyone. The most common form causes one or more round patches of hair loss. Some people lose all scalp hair (alopecia totalis), while others lose hair across the entire body (alopecia universalis). Less common patterns include diffuse thinning or hair loss along the sides and back of the scalp (referred to as Ophiasis pattern).

Hair loss can be unpredictable. Some people experience spontaneous regrowth, while others may have recurring episodes. Treatment depends on your age, the severity of your disease, and your overall health. Options may include topical medications, corticosteroids, oral treatments, and FDA-approved JAK inhibitors for eligible patients. Your dermatologist can help determine the best treatment plan for you (or your child).

Taking Care of Yourself

Receiving a diagnosis of alopecia areata can bring feelings of anxiety, sadness, frustration, or uncertainty. **Those feelings are normal.**

There is no right or wrong way to live with alopecia areata. Some people embrace their hair loss, while others choose wigs, hats, scarves, eyebrow options, eyelashes, makeup, or other tools. The choice is personal. Connecting with friends, family, counselors, or support groups can also make a meaningful difference as you adjust to your diagnosis.

What to Know

- Alopecia areata is not contagious.
- It is not caused by something you did.
- Hair may regrow on its own–or with treatment.
- The disease is unpredictable, but treatment options continue to expand.
- YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

NAAF can help you:

- Find a dermatologist experienced in treating alopecia areata
- Connect with local and virtual support groups
- Learn about treatment options and research
- Explore wigs, brows, lashes, and other cosmetic options
- Attend webinars and the Annual NAAF Conference
- Stay informed about clinical trials
- Access trusted educational resources for every stage of your journey

Visit **naaf.org/newly-diagnosed** *or scan the QR code to access trusted information, practical resources, and a supportive community. Whether you've just been diagnosed or have been living with alopecia areata for years, NAAF is here to help.*

Statement of Inclusion: Alopecia areata looks different for everyone. NAAF makes every effort to choose images that reflect the diversity of our community and the many ways people choose to live with their disease. Some have partial or total hair loss. Others have spontaneous or treatment-related regrowth, or hair loss that is camouflaged by wigs, head coverings or other tools. Everyone's journey is unique.

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