



# BALDNESS, PATTERN

(Androgenetic Alopecia)



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Gradual, painless hair loss that occurs in a certain pattern as a person ages. The medical term is androgenetic alopecia. The earlier the hair loss begins, the greater the eventual loss. Some persons have short periods of intense hair loss followed by long, stable periods. In men, hair loss appears as early as the teens; in women, it rarely appears before their 50s.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- In men, hair thins on top of the head and recedes in the temple and frontal areas.
- In women, hair tends to thin on top of the head.
- Both sexes may have scattered hair loss.

### CAUSES

It is probably due to a combination of hormonal and genetic factors. Male hormones (most often, androgens) are an important factor in balding. Estrogen (a female hormone) may be protective in women, because hair loss rarely begins before menopause.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

Family history of pattern baldness. Hair loss that occurs after illness, pregnancy, or as an adverse reaction to drugs is a different form of baldness. Normal everyday stress is not a cause of male pattern baldness.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Some drug therapies have been shown to slow or reverse baldness to some degree in some men. Other medical treatments are undergoing study.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- There is no cure. Balding can range from partial loss to complete baldness.
- In most cases, men let the process run its course. Use of a hairpiece or hair transplant is acceptable to some. Drug therapy may help others.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- There are no medical complications.

- Baldness can cause emotional distress, such as anxiety and a negative effect on self-image.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- There is usually no need for medical care. If you do have concerns about the hair loss, see your health care provider. If it is not a typical hair loss, medical tests may be done to see if there is another cause.
- If you are not comfortable with the hair loss, there are options that you can consider.

Wear a hairpiece (toupee or a wig) or get a hair weave (synthetic hair is sewn into existing hair). Be sure to use care in keeping your scalp clean under the hairpiece.

Have a hair-transplantation operation or scalp-reduction surgery. Be sure to seek information about the risks and benefits before undergoing these procedures.

Use drug therapy.

- Be cautious about buying and using hair products that claim to thicken or strengthen hair. They often use oils or waxes to give an effect of thickening.

### MEDICATIONS

- A nonprescription topical drug, minoxidil, seems to help hair growth in some patients. Its effectiveness varies greatly. If it helps you, you need to continue its use indefinitely to sustain hair growth.
- Finasteride is a drug taken by mouth that can be prescribed for hair loss in men. It is not approved for use in women as it may cause birth defects.

### ACTIVITY

No limits.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has concerns about hair loss.

