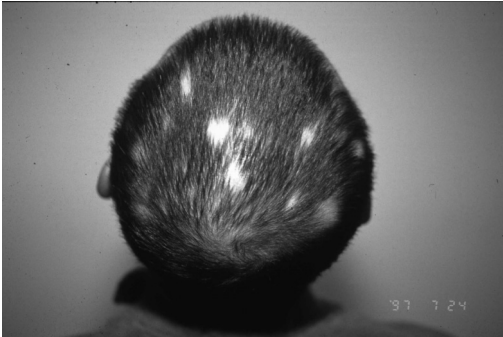


Alopecia Areata Patient Information



What is Alopecia Areata?

Alopecia Areata (AA) is a condition that causes hair loss to any part of the body that grows hair. This loss may take many forms. It most commonly appears as small, distinct patches of hair loss but it can look like anything from a band of loss around the base of the scalp to complete loss of all body hair. This condition affects approximately 2% of the population regardless of age, sex or race, and although the condition

itself is completely benign, **AA** can be devastating to some individuals due to its cosmetic impact.

What causes AA?

No one really knows what causes **AA** but the best evidence suggests that it is an autoimmune disorder. This means that your immune system mistakenly thinks your hair is foreign and is attacking it as it would any other invading force. As a result of this attack, the root of your hair becomes disabled and the hair falls out. Sometimes the hair breaks off at the surface of the skin leaving what looks like little black dots on the scalp, usually at the margins of an area of loss. This type of breakage is called “exclamation point hairs” and is a hallmark of **AA**.

Is there a cure for AA?

No. There is currently no cure for **AA**. Although research is ongoing, the autoimmune component of this condition makes the likelihood of finding a cure remote. It also makes the condition unpredictable. You will find you go through periods when you lose more hair. There will also be times when you have little or no loss. This can be frustrating and discouraging but please remember

you are not alone. **AA** is reported to affect ~2% of the population.

What are my treatment options?

There are many treatment options for **AA** but the results are variable and individual. Some of the following treatments work well for some but not at all for others. Most treatments require 12 weeks of therapy for any results to be seen.

Kenalong Injections: This treatment involves injecting the effected areas with a steroid, which acts to dampen the immune system in that localized area, allowing the hair to re-grow. This treatment is done every 4-8 weeks and is only appropriate for **AA** involving less than 50% of the scalp.

DPCP treatment: This is a weekly application of a mild topical irritant that acts to distract the immune system allowing the hair to grow. This must be done in the office. The patient will be given a prescription for the DPCP and will then bring it into the office to be applied by the nurse.

Anthralin: This is also a mild topical irritant that is applied to the

scalp, similar to DPCP. Anthralin, however, is applied daily for one hour and may be used at home.

Minoxidil: This is a topical medication in liquid form that is applied to the scalp twice daily. The patient does this treatment at home, but a prescription is required. We also use Minoxidil in combination with other treatments such as topical steroid creams and Anthralin.

Doing nothing: At least 50% of patients will re-grow their hair within the first year of onset with no treatment.



What makes AA worse?

There is nothing that we know of that will make your **AA** worse (i.e. cause more hair to fall out). It is the nature of **AA** to be unpredictable. You will go through times when you lose more hair and times when the loss is not as bad. There is no way to predict these fluctuations in growth and lose. Even if you are undergoing treatment you will still have times when you loose more. This is the normal course of **AA**.

What can I do until my hair grows back?

Make-up/tattooing: Some people choose to camouflage their hair loss with make-up or tattooing. You can use something as simple as eye-liner or eye-shadow that matches your hair colour or you may choose to purchase special coloured hair sprays that help mask thinning or bald areas. Because the patches of loss on the scalp can move around, it is best to use temporary or semi-permanent make-up only.

Tattooing is a permanent way to camouflage areas such as eyebrows but must be done by a certified professional. It is useful to take an old picture of yourself with

eyebrows to show the tattoo artist so you can achieve a natural look.

Hats/scarves: Hats and scarves are an easy, cheap and versatile way to deal with hair loss but they are not always an option in some jobs or schools.

Wigs/hair pieces: Wigs and hairpieces are always an option for those with hair loss. They can be made of natural or synthetic hair and come pre-styled or long so they can be cut and styled to suit your face. They can be quite expensive but Dr. Shapiro is often willing to write a letter that you may send to your extended healthcare provider so that you may be reimbursed for the cost of a wig.



Resources

National Alopecia Areata Foundation

This is an international group that acts as a resource for individuals with **AA**.

PO Box 150760
San Rafael, CA 94975-0760
(415) 456-4644
www.naaf.org

Alopecia Support Group

Dr. Shapiro holds a quarterly Alopecia Support Group meeting on the 3rd floor at the Skin Care Centre.

For more information please contact Enzina Carida at
604-941-1781

Locks of Love

Non-profit organization that provides free custom fit hairpieces for children under the age of 18.

www.locksoflove.org
(561) 963-1677 tel
(561) 963-9914 fax
1-888-896-1588 pre-recorded
information



The Skin
Care Centre
Hair Clinic

If you have further questions alopecia areata please contact the clinic:

Dr. Jerry Shapiro
835 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4E8
604-875-5151
www.skincarecentre.ca

Prepared by:
Judy Wiggin, RN,
Hair Clinic Nurse



The Skin
Care Centre