

Monilethrix is a rare inherited disorder characterized by sparse, dry, and/or brittle hair that often breaks before reaching more than a few inches in length. The hair may lack luster, and there may be patchy areas of hair loss (alopecia). Another common symptom may be the appearance of elevated spots (papules) surrounding the hair follicles that may be covered with gray or brown crusts or scales (perifollicular hyperkeratosis). When viewed under a microscope, the hair shaft resembles a string of evenly-spaced beads. In most cases, monilethrix is inherited as an autosomal dominant trait. Monilethrix affects males and females in equal numbers. The exact number of people affected by this disorder is not known. Monilethrix may be apparent at birth or by the age of two years. In some cases, the symptoms may improve at puberty or during pregnancy; in other cases, the symptoms may remain the same throughout life.