

Hair loss

It's normal to shed hair. We can lose between 50 and 100 hairs a day, often without noticing.

If you lose more hair than normal you may have alopecia - the medical name for hair loss.

Losing your hair is not usually a sign of illness, but it can be upsetting.

Symptoms

You may notice:

- your hair sheds more when you brush or wash your hair
- hair not growing, resulting in bald patches on your scalp

Some types of hair loss may last for a short while. But other types are lasting, like male and female pattern baldness.

Where you can lose hair from

You will usually lose hair from your head. You can also lose hair from other parts of your body, for example your eyebrows and legs. Loss of hair on your legs as you get older is common.

Who can have hair loss problems

Adults, children and babies can have hair loss or hair growth problems.

Some hair loss is a normal part of getting older. Your hair thins and you shed more hair.

Some babies are very slow to grow hair. But it usually does not continue into childhood.

Types of hair loss (alopecia)

There are many types of hair loss with different causes.

Common types of hair loss are:

Alopecia areata

If you have alopecia areata you get patches of hair loss on your scalp. Your hair usually grows back.

Telogen effluvium

If you have telogen effluvium your hair sheds and gets thin. For example, after having a baby or period of illness.

Some of the causes are:

- an illness
- stress
- weight loss
- iron deficiency

Your hair stops shedding or grows back after a few months - usually once you are better.

[Hair loss after having a baby](#)

Frontal fibrosing alopecia

Frontal fibrosing alopecia is where you lose your eyebrows and notice your hairline receding. It's more common in women.

Male pattern hair loss

Male pattern hair loss is when you lose hair from the crown of your head. It often runs in families and some people lose their hair at a young age.

Female pattern hair loss

Female pattern hair loss is when you have thinning of hair on the crown of your head. This can run in families. It is not connected to your age or to menopause.

Hair loss from cancer treatment

Hair loss from cancer treatment can affect people in different ways. Some treatments cause you to lose only some hair or for your hair to thin. But some cause you to lose hair from all over your body.

Treatment

Most hair loss doesn't need treatment and is either:

- for a short time and it will grow back
- a normal part of getting older

See a GP if you:

- have areas of hair loss that are itchy or sore
- are losing hair in clumps
- are worried about your hair loss
- have sudden hair loss

Hair loss treatments

Treatment may help with some types of hair loss. But no treatment is 100% effective.

Treatments include:

- steroid injections given into bald patches
- steroid creams you put on bald patches
- a tattoo used to look like short hair and eyebrows
- hair transplant - hair cells are moved to thinning patches
- scalp reduction surgery - sections of scalp with hair are stretched and stitched together
- artificial hair transplant - surgery to implant artificial hairs

There are no active clinical trials for hair loss at the moment.

Hair clinics

If you are thinking of going to a commercial hair clinic talk to your GP before doing this. These can be expensive.

Cost of medicine

Your GP can tell you if any medicines are covered by your medical card or under the [drugs payment scheme](#).

Shampoo

There is no shampoo that will help your hair regrow. Use mild shampoo if you have hair loss - ask your pharmacist about shampoos you can buy.

Supplements

There is not enough evidence that vitamins and supplements work for hair loss.

Wigs and the wig grant

There are two types of wigs you can get - synthetic wigs and real-hair wigs.

If you have hair loss from cancer or types of alopecia there is a grant worth €500 to help you cover the cost of a hairpiece, wig or hair replacement.

This is through the Department of Social Protection's [Treatment Benefit Scheme](#).

You must contact a [hair replacement product supplier](#) on the Department's list. Before you get treatment they will be able to check if you qualify for the €500 grant.

[List of hair replacement product suppliers by county - gov.ie](#)

The types of alopecia the scheme covers include:

- alopecia areata - including alopecia totalis or universalis, diffuse alopecia areata, alopecia ophiasis
- primary scarring alopecias - also known as cicatricial alopecias
- frontal fibrosing alopecia and lichen planopilaris (scarring alopecia)
- chemotherapy induced alopecia - anagen effluvium
- alopecia caused by surgery or trauma, including burns

[Treatment Benefit Scheme - gov.ie](#)

Living with hair loss

Losing hair can be upsetting. For many people, hair is an important part of who they are.

[Tips for low mood](#)

Join a support group

There are support groups and message boards online for people with hair loss.

They are usually run by other people with hair loss.

In a support group you can chat to other people who have the same problems. They can give you useful advice about living with hair loss.

This can help you with how you feel about yourself and help you feel less alone.

[Support groups - alopeciaireland.ie](#)

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