

# MALE PATTERN HAIR LOSS

Baldness or male pattern hair loss (also called androgenetic alopecia) is the most common cause of male hair loss. Baldness affects one in every two Australian men by the time they turn 50 years of age. Hair loss can begin at any time after puberty and affects people in different ways. The important thing to remember is that hair loss does not INFLUENCE your physical well being. However, if it starts affecting the way you look at and feel about yourself, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about available treatments and which is best for you.

## Normal hair cycle

Hair growth begins in the hair follicles. Blood vessels supply the follicles with the nutrients they need to manufacture healthy hair. Hair is formed by a splitting up of cells in the bottom of the follicle. After a hair is formed, it grows up the stem of the follicle. Once a hair is shed, the new one takes its place.

## Natural hair loss

Each hair lives for about five years before it is shed. A replacement hair normally takes its place within six months. It is normal to lose between 50 and 100 hairs each day. The difference between men with pattern hair loss and those who keep their hair is that balding men don't always get a replacement hair for the ones that are shed.

## What causes male pattern hair loss?

### Hormones

Male pattern baldness depends on the presence of male hormones. The most well known male hormone is testosterone. Testosterone can be converted into a more active hormone called dihydrotestosterone (DHT) by an enzyme found in skin cells and hair follicles called 5-alpha reductase (5 R).

Men with male pattern hair loss have high levels of DHT in their skin. This hormone

shortens the growth phase of the normal hair cycle. The follicles also produce weaker, shorter hair and may stop making scalp hair altogether.

### Genes

Hair loss at a young age is passed through families. Baldness can be inherited from either your mother's or your father's side of the family.

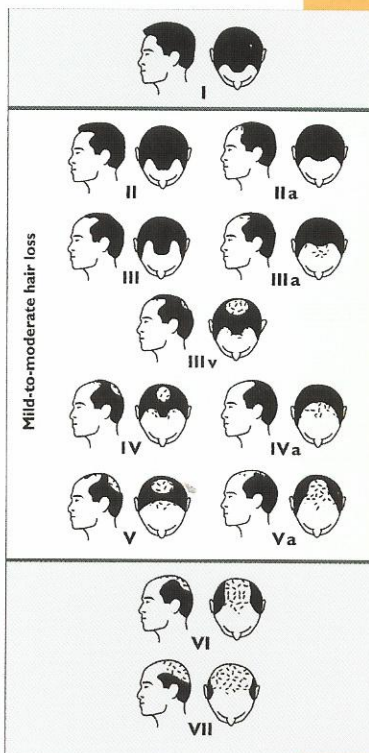
### Age

Age is another important factor. As men grow older, the likelihood of suffering male pattern hair loss increases.

## Symptoms

- Receding front hairline
- Bald spot on the crown of the head
- Complete loss of hair on top of the head

A dermatologist may take a hair sample and examine it under a microscope to determine



Stages of hair loss

what may have caused the balding. If the skin is irritated or unhealthy looking, he or she may also take a skin biopsy and analyse a portion of the scalp to determine what type of hair loss the patient has.

## Treatment options

There is no cure for male pattern hair loss but it can be treated. For those who want to treat hair loss, options include:

### Cosmetic measures

- Camouflage – these treatments dye the scalp the same colour as the hair and make the hair appear thicker.
- Wigs – modern wigs provide excellent coverage and look natural.

### Drug therapies

- 5-Alpha Reductase Inhibitors (finasteride). Use of finasteride has been shown to stop hair loss and may actually reverse the balding process. It normally takes at least three months to see any results.
- Minoxidil is considered a hair loss prevention drug. The drug is in liquid form and is rubbed onto the bald areas.

Both treatments must be continuous to prevent further hair loss.

### Surgical options

- Hair transplants - tiny plugs of hair from the back or side of the scalp are transplanted to the bald spots. The transplanted hair can take several months to start regrowing in their new position.
- Scalp reduction - the skin on the scalp is stretched and surgically removed. After the loose skin is removed, hairy areas on either side of the head are stretched over and sewn together.
- Tissue expansion - tiny balloons are implanted on the scalp between areas with thick hair. Over a two- or three-

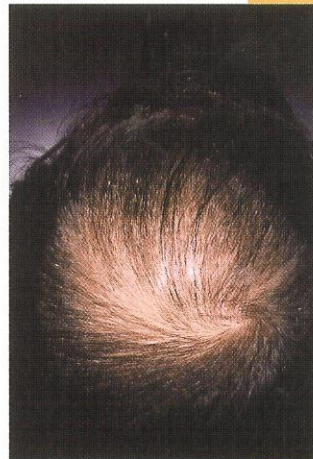
month period, they are blown up. Then the area is removed, as in the scalp reduction procedure, and the sides are pulled up to the top of the head.

## Self care

### Change your hair style

- Keep it short - a shorter haircut may make you look like you have more hair.
- Get a perm - a mild perm can also give the appearance of greater hair volume.
- Shave it off - cutting off all your hair may be a way to deal with partial hair loss.
- Cover it up - you may want to cover your bald spots with a hairpiece. You might be surprised at how advanced hairpieces have become.

An important thing to remember is that your hair has little to do with your physical health and that losing hair is not uncommon. More people lose their hair than keep it!



### Other relevant Fact Cards:

- *Men's Health*

### Contact:

**Your doctor** – listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book

**Your Self Care pharmacist.** To find (02) 6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

Sponsored by



**KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN**  
**DAVID S. NOLTE PHARMACY**

David S. Nolte, B.Pharm., M.P.S.  
701 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH CARLTON 3054  
Tel. 9349 1522 - Fax 9349 1115



**MERCK SHARP & DOHME**

Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia) Pty Limited  
54 - 68 Fernfield Street South Granville NSW 2142

*Pharmacy Self Care has a strong commitment to providing current and reliable health information.  
The information in this card was current at time of printing.*

