

Male Pattern Hair Loss

What is male pattern hair loss?

Male pattern hair loss refers to hair thinning and decreased hair density that occurs after puberty. It is also known as androgenetic alopecia.

What causes male pattern hair loss?

The cause of male pattern hair loss is likely to be due to genetic susceptibility that leads to the follicle being more sensitive to the male hormone dihydrotestosterone. Most men do not have an excess of male hormones (androgens) but these hormones are responsible for male pattern hair loss. Men castrated before puberty do not develop male pattern hair loss.

Is male pattern hair loss hereditary?

A family history of hair loss is common, which supports inheritance. A number of genetic locations have been identified that are linked to male pattern hair loss. The androgen receptor gene is located on the X chromosome (inherited from the mother) and is of particular interest.

What are the symptoms?

Most men become aware of recession of the frontal hairline and hair thinning on top of the head. Hair shedding is not usually apparent and usually there are no symptoms.

What does male pattern hair loss look like?

The density of hair decreases and individual hairs become finer. The first area involved is the frontal hairline, often with bitemporal recession. As the condition progresses the crown becomes involved and the bald areas can join up to leave a horseshoe area of hair around the sides and back.

Can it be cured?

Whilst there are a number of treatments that can slow the process or partially reverse it, complete reversal to pre-puberty density is not achievable with medical treatments.

How can male pattern hair loss be treated?

Male pattern hair loss can be treated with solutions applied to the scalp, tablet treatments aimed at decreasing male hormones, or camouflage treatments aimed at disguising the thinned areas. Hair transplantation can improve hair density at the front of the head by moving follicles from unaffected areas at the back of the head.

Minoxidil solution

Minoxidil tablets were originally developed to treat blood pressure but were found to cause unwanted hair growth. This led to the development of minoxidil solution specifically for genetic hair loss. This is available over the counter and is licensed at 2% and 5% strength for men. The lotion should be applied twice daily to the scalp. Treatment is long term.

5 α reductase inhibitors

Finasteride inhibits the conversion of testosterone to the more active dihydrotestosterone and is licensed at low strength to treat male pattern hair loss. Most people tolerate treatment with no side effects. Potential side effects include decreased libido, impotence and breast tissue tenderness. Side effects are infrequent and reversible on stopping treatment. Treatment works best when started early before hair loss is advanced. Treatment needs to be continued long term.

Hair transplantation

Hair follicles can be harvested from the non-hormone dependent hair at the back of the head and transplanted to areas of hair loss in the frontal area.

What can I do?

- Seek unbiased medical help and be sceptical of the latest online miracle cure!
- Try active treatment for a minimum of 12 months

Where can I get more information?

<http://www.dermnetnz.org/hair-nails-sweat/pattern-balding.html>

<http://www.dermnetnz.org/treatments/minoxidil.html>

<http://www.dermnetnz.org/treatments/finasteride.html>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/hairloss/Pages/Male-pattern%20baldness.aspx>

<http://www.propecia.co.uk>

<http://www.farjo.net>

