

## **Alyssa .....It's not worth the stress, I know image seems like everything these days—especially with teenage girls.. Maybe even boys. But it is ok.**

Hi! I'm Alyssa! I am 19 years old and I was 17 when I found my first "spot"!

I was at the movies with a friend who looked at the top of my head (I am quite small so seeing the top of my head isn't hard) they pointed out that smack bang in the middle of my part toward the back there was a perfect circular patch of complete baldness, it was about the size of a twenty cent piece. Of course I freaked but didn't believe it could be Alopecia. I went home and showed my parents; my mum looked concerned and we both went up to my neighbour's house.

My neighbour, Paul, has had alopecia for many many years and had the unfortunate luck of getting Alopecia Universalis (where every hair on her body had fallen off and not returned since). He gave it one look and knew exactly what it was. I was gutted and the stressing began. That was my first spot of Alopecia.

Now I should tell you that since that first spot I have had many since, but am quite fortunate in that my hair always grows back, sometimes I only thin out at the front of my hair line or the back of my head where the part ends.

My doctors and dermatologists had told me my spots must be due to stress, I didn't want to tell anybody why I was stressed, I didn't even admit to myself I was. I later came to the conclusion that I was stressed and going through depression and anxiety due to the usual stresses teenagers do get whilst going through VCE and being told they need to know exactly what they will do after school and for the rest of their life, etc... Oh, and coming to the realisation that I was gay.

My "friend" that noticed my hair at the movies was a bit more than a friend and it was time to come to terms on that with myself and family.

Since that all happened in 2011; I still generally get a bit of a patch here or there every few months or so due to the smallest amount of stress- it's not a big deal to me anymore but I remember the worry and extra stress I put myself through worrying that I would one day lose all of my hair, and who knows; maybe I will but that's something I have totally accepted, my family and my now girlfriend are all there for me and support me in that if I ever did lose all my hair to make me feel better they said they'd shave their hair off too.. I'd probably cry if any of them did that just for me, and it makes me feel so much better knowing that it really is not a big deal having alopecia if there are people out their willing to shave their perfectly fine head of hair in support of people who do have it.

It's not worth the stress, I know image seems like everything these days—especially with teenage girls.. Maybe even boys. But it is ok. It is only hair and if it grows back that's awesome! But if it doesn't ... Just remember all of the things you are fortunate to still have!

