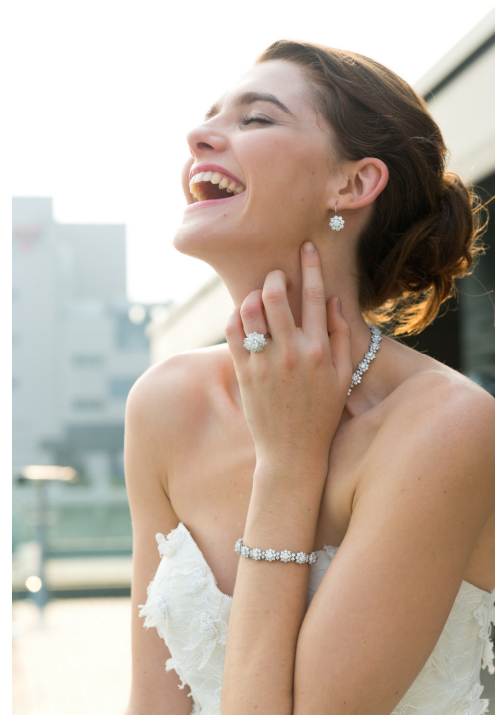


Catherine.....21, Whether I have hair or not I am always thankful for what I have, rather on concentrating on what I don't have.

Up until now, my journey with Alopecia Areata has really strengthened me as a person.

I first discovered my Alopecia when I was in a rehearsal at university during my second year. I was playing with my hair and all of sudden I felt my bald scalp about as big as half the size of my palm. I was in shock. I had never lost any of my hair before and was upset because I absolutely loved my brown thick hair. My cousin had Alopecia so I knew what it was - a systemic autoimmune disorder where the body attacks its own hair follicles and suppresses or stops the hair growth altogether.



For the first couple of months, I researched it a lot trying to come to terms with it and went to see a hair and skin specialist. I felt as though I needed to professionally clarify what this condition entailed and how it could be treated. Unfortunately it appeared that there was in fact no cure and there were treatments I could try, such as creams which I did try and didn't work and others such as corticosteroid injections into the skin which were not guaranteed to work and could be somewhat painful. That particular year I had been stressed with university and my immune system was down so I decided with the support of my family and best friends that I would just try and grow my hair by naturally working to stimulate hair growth. I made sure that I really looked after myself, eating healthy, massaging my scalp to stimulate blood circulation for hair growth and giving my hair good conditioning treatments. Thankfully during this time, I went to South America and was really into large headbands so it covered the bald areas on the side of my scalp and over time my hair started to grow back.



Working internationally as a model in the fashion industry has really cemented my ideas about beauty, the way I choose to deal with my condition professionally and personally and overall how I feel about myself.

When I first started working with hair stylists, on occasions they would often look at me puzzled as to why I had cut my hair at different layers underneath on the sides. Much to the teams delight, I often joked that I just wanted a really eccentric haircut but I always openly informed them of my condition afterwards. They were mostly accommodating, and it was not something I ever felt embarrassed about. I learnt from my mother who is a hairdresser, that a good hairdresser is one who can work with any hair type, cut and style:) I often feel blessed that I have not lost all my hair because I know that is not always the case for many others who suffer from Alopecia.

I now only have very few bald patches and my hair has grown back even curlier which I love but I can't be sure this will always be the case so all I try to do is to keep a very positive mindset and look after myself. Whether I have hair or not I am always thankful for what I have, rather on concentrating on what I don't have. A positive mindset will have you discover that it's not how you look, it's how you see. It has been through my experience working professionally in an industry which is based

on aesthetics and in my personal life that hair is a contributing factor that it does help to enhance a women's beauty but without it, there was always beauty to begin with.

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