

**Martina..... Yeah I miss the visits to the hairdressers, the pampering that went along with it all, but I spend the money elsewhere – wigs are fun – today my hair was long and wavy tomorrow it may be a short bob style..**

My Journey with Alopecia started around the same time as I discovered I was pregnant with my first child. At 27 years old. The first signs of hair loss came as I left the hairdressers with a flowing mane of newly coloured hair. I was checking myself out in the mirror, and I saw by each temple, a smooth hairless area about the size of two fifty cent pieces. I immediately put it down to my hair being over coloured and stressed out. Needless to say I did not pull my hair back into any pony tails for the remainder of my pregnancy.



I didn't think again of this until about one month post pregnancy, my hair began to fall out in giant clumps. Each morning I would wake up to see my pillowcase covered in hair. It was distressing to say the least. I found myself not wanting to see my reflection and even worse not wanting my husband to see my hair lose too. I eventually became 100% bald. My Eyebrows were gone, my eyelashes too, I didn't grow hair under my arms anymore, {let alone in any other private areas} the hairs inside my nose even disappeared, along with my confidence and my happy-go-lucky attitude. I did however become the owner of a very large and colourful beanie collection to see me through winter for those cold nights in bed. Doctors tested me for countless illness' no clear cut answers were given to me which I found to be soooooo frustrating and really taxing on myself esteem. I thought if I had a condition to blame this on then I could take some comfort in knowing it was nothing I had done to cause this. So with countless tests done and countless hours on the internet it was put down to unexplained sudden and total hair loss – Alopecia. I had to keep telling myself that it was "only hair" and that "I wasn't dying or didn't have Cancer- it just looked like I was going through Chemo" when I felt like my world was crashing down around me.

I never thought of myself being a vain person, but losing my hair showed me how much hair and appearance really mattered to me and the world surrounding me. Everything seemed to be telling me that I was faulty, every ad on television was for hair shampoos or treatments or hair colouring to which I had no use for anymore. Even hearing and seeing my girlfriend's results from a trip to the hairdressers upset me; just not making that phone call to make an appointment for some "girlie time" was depressing.

Confidence made a return, to a degree, with the purchase of a wig, and I carried on with life as best I could. I married the love of my life wearing a wig and skilfully drawn on eyebrows, Alopecia wasn't going to wreck my wedding day!  
My hair made another appearance when I fell pregnant with my second child – only to have it fall out again after the birth.

The day my then 3 year old son told me that he wished he could give me his hair so I wouldn't be upset anymore, made me reassess what was important in life - Family and friends that love you for you, and the realisation that I am more than My Hair!

The daily challenges of dealing with Alopecia vary from, an ultra sensitive nose due to no nasal hairs, and how important eyelashes are (they actually are very clever little hairs that do more than you think), the fine art of drawing on eyebrows daily, or accidentally wiping your eyebrow off! (the horror) worrying about windy days (hair flying off into the distance) and Summer-time being a little uncomfortable wearing wigs, but all in all, Alopecia has taught me that I am loved and valued even with no hair.

Sitting at my computer writing this I have an eight year old and a 4 year old that laugh at me when I brush my now patchy 2 inch long grey hair after showering {my hair grew back white}, my eyebrows have grown back, I wear a wig daily, but my hair loss does not define me. I choose who to tell and who not to tell. I carry on and try not to let it hold me back in life. I have been skydiving with the aid of a scarf and a really supportive family (I wore a scarf tied tightly on my head and took the step) my husband was very proud that I did it.

Today I am 36. I coloured my grey hair that I have for the first time (I let my husband do it and yes it was as comical as you can imagine) – it is now a shade of purple, its fun, not everyone will get to see it (only the chosen few). Yeah I miss the visits to the hairdressers, the pampering that went along with it all, but I spend the money elsewhere – wigs are fun – today my hair was long and wavy tomorrow it may be a short bob style. I've got hair today – but it could be gone tomorrow. But I know that I can cope, because hair does not define the person I am it just keeps my head warm.

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