

Allana — My Friend called Alopecia

I first met my friend alopecia at the age of 13; she came by herself, one small patch at the back of my head. She was shy, avoided the limelight, hiding behind my long brown locks, disappearing on her own 12 months later. At the age of 15, alopecia areata popped in for a visit, in the shape of two small patches, behind both my ears. Again, quite shy and easily disguised, she left on her own 18 months later.

Alopecia areata is like a strange aunt, the one that calls in unannounced, makes a mess of the place, eventually leaves but you know she'll be back..



So here I am, 12 years later at the age of 27, looking straight in the mirror at ALOPECIA AREATA. She's back. This time she's not shy, she wants the limelight, she's back with a vengeance, and I'm not so sure she's going to leave. She first arrived as a couple of small patches at the back of my head. Easily disguised yet again. Of course, she thought otherwise this time. Two little patches became four little patches, which became six little patches and now I'm looking at myself in the mirror with one huge patch taking up far too much time, trying to be disguised under my long brown locks.

Over the past 12 months, Alopecia Areata has challenged me and changed me. Brushing my hair became difficult, visiting the hairdresser less enjoyable. The true panic in the form of a racing heart and shortness of breath that would catch me unawares as I showered and washed my hair, looking down at the plug hole filling with hair, was never pleasant.

Feeling down in the dumps, wondering why I was the unlucky one to be hit with the ugly stick, I called my mum, we had a big cry and then decided to take on Alopecia Areata as a team. My team consists of my biggest fans, my mum (& her partner), my dad (& his partner), my partner Neil and my two schnauzers Stanley and Hugo. My mum is my personal assistant. She takes on a lot for me, her shoulders heavy with my tears and concerns. She's been researching, wig shopping, attending treatment appointments (yes, we've tried a few), AAAF events with me, she is my photographer and supporter of my new passion for running (my way of being in control of my own health).

Allana — Healthy Alopecia to me means happiness within one's self, taking control of one's physical and mental health, feeling comfortable as me.

My dad, forever the academic, provides an objective view of Alopecia Areata, sending me the latest research he has found. He's been a great support, distracting me at times when I am feeling low. He promptly reminds me of all things great about my life, and as I go bald, so too is he (thanks to old age for him!). My partner Neil, reminds me I'm beautiful, I'm strong, I'm brave. He has this saying, "It's you and me against the world." Hair or no hair, he loves me for me. Stanley and Hugo, my gorgeous schnauzers, provide me with unconditional love. They keep me active, energised and happy. They are my free counsellors, forever listening at times of need.

ALOPECIA AREATA has challenged me and changed me.
Now when I ask, "Why me?" my mind is strong, and I am brave.
I'll take this one for the team.

Healthy Alopecia to me means happiness within one's self, taking control of one's physical and mental health, feeling comfortable as me. At a time where I was feeling a loss of control, I recently took up running. It's my way of taking back control of my health. I've improved my diet and exercise daily (running, gym class, or walk on the beach). I have set a goal to run a half marathon next year. Beyond this, I plan to attend yoga/meditation once a week to practice mindfulness. If I were to win \$2000, I would pay for my 1-year membership to yoga so I know I am committed & it's possible to attend class each week. The remaining money would go towards purchasing my first wig. I recently attended the Melbourne AAAF wig sale and fell in love with a wig with the cost of \$3000. This money would significantly improve my savings to purchase my dream wig which I otherwise wouldn't be able to do.

