

Pat — I'll be the bald one in a nursing home, but maybe by then I won't give a hoot. I can only hope.

My alopecia story began in 1989 when I was 39 years old. I experienced a tremendous shock that was to last some years. Not long after this, my first small patch of hair disappeared from the top of my head. Although I was preoccupied with bigger concerns, I was a little worried and the doctor sent me to a dermatologist who also seemed rather unconcerned. His exact words were "oh people are walking around like this all the time" like it was no big deal. Yet the patches of hair loss became larger and the cortisone injections into my scalp only regrew sparse white hairs of a totally different texture to my own. In time I stopped having the painful injections and decided instead to get a wig.

In those days, living in Adelaide and of course pre-internet, there was little to choose from. I remember coming home with a wig my nana may have worn and feeling so desperate and alone. I never wore that wig. Then a friend of mine gave me an old wig she had worn in the 1970s. At least it looked fairly modern being long and straight but of course it was hardly in good shape. However, a hairdresser cut it and I wore it for a little while, feeling very self-conscious the whole time. At that time I preferred a hat or scarf but with those I never felt like me.

I had always been interested in fitness. I played squash a couple of times a week, had gone to aerobic classes in the 1970s and '80s and taken up jogging in my late 20s. I was still a jogger up to this point and participated in fun-runs and ran about five kilometers four or five times a week and had run a half marathon.. However, with the loss of my hair came a loss of motivation and my running days slowly wound down. Trying to cope with trauma, my energy levels were at an all time low and it was all I could do to get through the day. I began to isolate myself and developed panic attacks and agoraphobia. It seemed my body was turning on itself and I was a helpless onlooker.



Pat —

In 1995 my family and I relocated to Queensland and amazingly there was a wig store not far from where I lived. Wearing that wig was the very first time since my hairloss that I felt like me. The feelings I had of wanting to hide away from society gradually left me and since that time I have continued to wear wigs and I rarely go out without one on my head. Only my immediate family and a few friends and faceless people at the beach have seen my bald head. Nearly 30 years on since my first bald spot appeared you would think I would not care about being bald but I can assure you I care very much indeed. I hated being bald at 39 and I hate it now as I near my 70s. Yes, I have accepted it because rather than rant and rave about my baldness I decided a long time ago to be responsible for myself. Being responsible for myself means I want to look and feel good about myself. I may not be young anymore but I take no pleasure in being wrinkly and bald.

Moving to the Sunshine Coast it was wonderful to take up jogging again, I began a yoga practise and also took up lifting weights at the gym. Unfortunately Polymyalgia rheumatica, another autoimmune but very painful condition stopped me in my tracks in my mid-50s and to be able to move I had to take prednisone tablets for 5 years. It has left me with painful hips and knees so I don't run anymore but continue in a limited way to attend gym four times a week. So although I'm nearing 70 I still enjoy doing some form of fitness.

Over the years I have worn many wigs, the good the bad and the ugly, but I have persevered in trying many types. I've bought from stores and over the internet. I keep an open mind and realize wigs have their failings. No matter what, they are not my own hair. The other day I got out a box where I keep a little of my own hair that I gathered up and kept all these years ago. I often forget what colour my hair was and I need reminding from time to time. It was dark blond with reddish tints although when I buy my wigs I buy them darker, I don't know why. One day I will have to buy a grey one I suppose, but for now I'm putting that day off. Going grey is a milestone in most people's lives that I may never experience. Another stage in our journey of life denied to us alopecians.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story and for the opportunity to share it. I've resigned myself to knowing I'll be the bald one in a nursing home, but maybe by then I won't give a hoot. I can only hope.

