



Australia Alopecia Areata Foundation Inc.  
Alopecia Areata  
..... it's life changing

Youth talking about Alopecia  
Areata



Australia Alopecia  
Areata Foundation  
Inc.

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So what exactly is Alopecia Areata?

**Alopecia Areata** is hair loss from the scalp, eyebrows, eyelashes, and the body. It's an **autoimmune** condition. Our immune system is what attacks germs that would normally make us sick so that we stay healthy. In this case, the body **treats its** hair follicles as foreign tissues (germs) and slows down or stops hair growth. However, the hair **never** dies, so the hair always has the potential to **regrow**. Alopecia Areata is not contagious, and it **doesn't** cause any physical pain.

What do your friends  
think about your  
alopecia?

They never mention it

They are protective of me when I get bullied

My friends don't know

They are really supportive of me

My group of friends made me realise that  
it's OK to be different

How would your  
parents describe  
Alopecia?

It's when you have patches

It's an autoimmune condition

You lost your hair and there's no cure

It's nothing to worry about, and a lot of  
people have it.

Your immune system attacks your hair

Life-changing

The body's immune system is attacking  
the hair follicles, so the hair falls out.

They say it frustrates them as they have  
tried lots of treatments to try to help

Do you do the  
things your friends  
do?

-I swim, play **competitive** netball and do  
ballet.

-I do **everything** my friends do.

-I'm very active and have **heaps** of  
trophies in **AFL**, golf, soccer, and tennis,  
but I like motorbikes and skateboarding.

-I'm into **music** and tennis.

-I got **3rd** place in world karate



Georgia, 17.

I've had **Alopecia Areata** since I was  
four. George  
Orwell once said  
that "**happiness**  
can only exist in  
**acceptance**". I  
tend to agree with  
him. What he  
**forgot** is that  
acceptance, like  
happiness, **are**  
not a moment or  
event, but a  
**process**.

Alopecia - Areata:  
How do you say it?  
Al-oh-pee-shah  
This means hair loss.  
Ar-ee-ah-tah  
This means patchy.



## Having trouble telling others about your Alopecia?

Your way of telling people about your Alopecia should make you comfortable and **unique**, just like you.

Use whatever you feel **comfortable** with and that fits the situation. Be yourself, and be proud of who you are. As a wise person once said, "Only a few heads are perfect, the rest are covered with hair to stop people from noticing!"

Some people might not know that you have Alopecia or what **Alopecia** is and therefore might not know how to react. It helps to have an answer ready for any questions, you could try "I have Alopecia, a condition that causes my hair to fall out".



## Teenagers with different forms of Alopecia Areata were asked the following questions and these were their responses:

### How to explain your Alopecia to others:

When you look a bit **different**, people may ask you questions about your appearance.

You may find it **tricky** to know how to answer questions. If someone asks you a question about your Alopecia, and you **feel like** answering, here are some tips:

You could say: "I have Alopecia. It means my hair falls out" or "I have Alopecia. It's an autoimmune condition that makes my hair fall out" "I'm not ill. Alopecia affects only my hair. I am otherwise as healthy as you"

If someone is **worried** if Alopecia is something they can catch from you: "I have Alopecia. It's not contagious. You can't catch it from me".

If you **do not feel like** answering questions, you don't have to: "I don't really want to talk about my Alopecia today. Perhaps I can answer your questions another day."

If you feel like the **same** person wants to talk about your Alopecia too **much**: "There is more to me than just having Alopecia. Please, can we talk about something else?"



Steph, 13.

Bringing my community **together** on knowing what Alopecia Areata is, was very **important**. People now have a **better** understanding of who **I am** and why I don't have **hair**

It's perfectly normal to feel **upset** from time to time. Many of us feel sad at times **because** of our Alopecia. We all deal with things differently.

Some of us like to talk to others, and some prefer some time on our **own**. It is usually **best** to share your feelings with others.

Perhaps a friend, a parent, a teacher, a grandparent.

It can help to develop a **motto** or mantra to remind ourselves on bad days that everything is ok. Here are some **suggestions**:

**I am ok just the way I am.**

**I have Alopecia**

**Alopecia doesn't have me.**

**Alopecia doesn't change who I am.**

**I can deal with whatever**

**Alopecia throws at me**

**because I am stronger than I think.**