



HOW DOES ALOPECIA AREATA START?

What happens first

- Alopecia Areata often begins suddenly, with small, round patches of hair loss appearing on the scalp or body.
- The skin in these areas usually looks smooth and normal, with no rash, flaking, or scarring.
- Some people notice increased hair shedding, tingling, or itching before the patches appear.
- The onset can happen within days or weeks, sometimes after stress, illness, or no clear trigger at all.

Sources:

- Epidemiology and burden of alopecia areata: a systematic review. CCID. (2015). [Link](#)
- Alopecia Areata: An Updated Review for 2023. JCMS. (2023). [Link](#)



WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE THE BODY

- The immune system mistakenly targets healthy hair follicles, interrupting the normal hair growth cycle.
- Inflammation develops around the follicle, causing it to shrink and stop producing hair.
- Importantly, the follicles remain alive, meaning regrowth is possible when the inflammation settles.
- The process is autoimmune, not infectious or related to poor hygiene.

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WHERE AND HOW IT SPREADS

- It may start with one or two small bald spots on the scalp.
- In some cases, it can spread to the eyebrows, eyelashes, beard, or body hair.
- Rarely, it progresses to complete scalp or full-body hair loss known as Alopecia Totalis or Alopecia Universalis.
- Hair can regrow spontaneously, even after total loss, although recurrence is common.

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WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE

- Hair falls out in clumps or circular patches.
- Sometimes “exclamation point hairs” appear — short, broken hairs that are thinner at the base.
- Nail changes such as pitting, ridges, or white spots can occur in some people.
- There’s no pain or scarring, just smooth skin where hair has fallen out.
- Every person’s pattern is different. For some it’s temporary, for others it can recur over time.

Sources:

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Quick Facts Box

Fact	Information	Source
Initial sign	Sudden round patches of hair loss	JCMS (2023)
Skin appearance	Smooth, normal skin (no rash/scarring)	CCID (2015)
Immune activity	Inflammation targets hair follicles	JCMS (2023)
Follicle survival	Hair follicles stay alive — regrowth possible	CCID (2015)
Onset speed	Can develop in days or weeks	JCMS (2023)
Contagious?	✗ No	CCID (2015)

Sources:

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- Alopecia Areata: An Updated Review for 2023. JCMS. (2023). [Link](#)

Learn more about Alopecia Areata, treatment options, and real-life stories at aaaf.org.au

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