



WHAT CAUSES ALOPECIA AREATA?

The Root Cause

- Alopecia Areata is an autoimmune disease.
- The body's immune system mistakenly attacks healthy hair follicles, treating them as if they were foreign invaders.
- This causes inflammation around the hair follicles, leading to hair shedding and stopping new hair growth.
- Hair follicles remain alive, which means regrowth is still possible once the inflammation settles.

Sources:

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



WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BODY

- Immune cells (mainly T-cells) cluster around hair follicles.
- These cells release signals that disrupt the hair growth cycle, pushing hairs into the shedding phase.
- Inflammation causes follicles to shrink temporarily. They don't die, but pause growth.

When the immune attack slows down, hair often regrows naturally.

Sources:

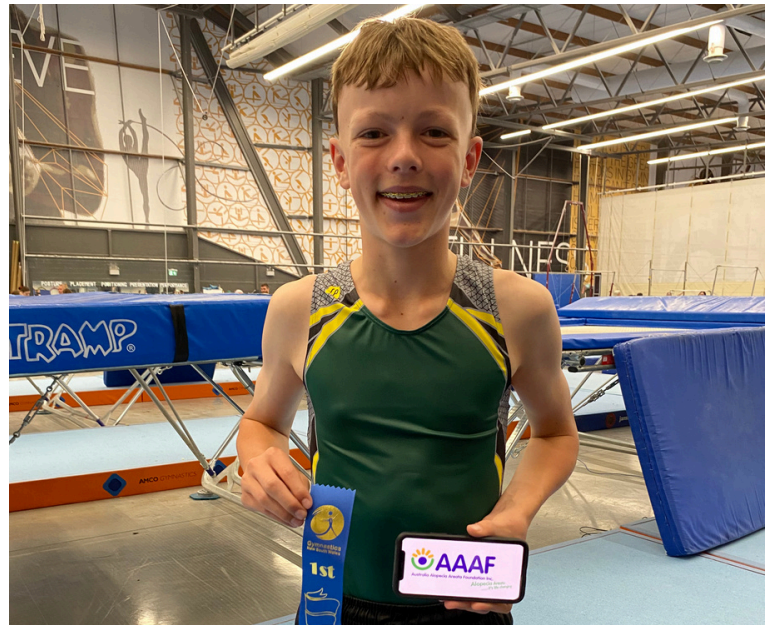
- Epidemiology and burden of alopecia areata: a systematic review. CCID. (2015). [Link](#)
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WHY IT HAPPENS

- The exact trigger is still unknown, but research points to a mix of:
 - **Genetic factors:** Some people have immune system genes that increase their risk.
 - **Environmental triggers:** Infections, stress, or hormonal shifts may spark an episode.
 - **Other autoimmune links:** Conditions like thyroid disease, vitiligo, or lupus sometimes occur alongside Alopecia Areata.
- It's not caused by stress or poor diet alone, though stress can worsen flare-ups.

Sources:

- Alopecia Areata: An Updated Review for 2023. JCMS. (2023). [Link](#)
- Familial patterns of alopecia areata: A systematic review and meta-analysis. PubMed. (2025). [Link](#)



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Alopecia Areata is not contagious and not caused by external damage to the scalp.
- It's a systemic immune response, not a local infection.
- Even though the immune system temporarily "shuts down" hair production,
 - follicles can recover and begin growing again.

Ongoing studies continue to uncover how to prevent immune attacks and support regrowth.

Sources:

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Quick Facts Box

Fact	Information	Source
Underlying cause	Autoimmune attack on hair follicles	CCID (2015)
Inflammation	Immune cells surround follicles and halt hair growth	JCMS (2023)
Follicle survival	Hair follicles stay alive; regrowth possible	JCMS (2023)
Main immune cells	T-cells, cytokines, and interferon pathways	CCID (2015)
Possible triggers	Genetic susceptibility, infections, stress, hormonal changes	PubMed (2025)
Contagious?	✗ No	CCID (2015)

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- Alopecia Areata: An Updated Review for 2023. JCMS. (2023). [Link](#)
- Familial patterns of alopecia areata: A systematic review and meta-analysis. PubMed. (2025). [Link](#)

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

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