

Female Pattern Hair Loss

Androgenetic alopecia (AGA) occurs in women as well as in men. In women, AGA is defined as female pattern hair loss. The patterns of AGA in women are significantly different from the AGA patterns in men. The typical appearance of female pattern hair loss is diffuse thinning of hair over the top of the scalp. The Ludwig Classification illustrates female pattern hair loss in increasing degrees of severity from Grade I and Grade III. Female pattern hair loss can begin at any age from teen-age through middle age. There may not be an obvious hereditary association; whereas a man with AGA usually has close male relatives with AGA, no such family pattern may be apparent for women. While AGA is the most common cause of permanent hair loss in women (about 50 percent of women over age 40 have some degree of female pattern hair loss), it is by no means the only cause. Non-AGA causes of hair loss are more frequent in women than in men; some of these causes are discussed in the next section. Women more than men are also likely to have temporary hair loss that may occur separately or together with female pattern hair loss. Two common causes of temporary hair loss in women are the hormonal changes associated with pregnancy and untreated hypothyroidism. A woman who is worried about loss of scalp hair should consult a physician hair restoration specialist for evaluation and diagnosis. Female hair loss can usually be successfully treated after a diagnosis is established.

Non-AGA Causes of Hair Loss

While androgenetic alopecia (AGA) is the most common cause of hair loss in both men and women, hair loss can also be due to a number of other conditions. These conditions may not be recognized until they are diagnosed by a physician hair restoration specialist. Successful treatment is dependent on correct diagnosis. Some of the most important of these non-AGA causes of hair loss:

- Alopecia areata—a possibly autoimmune disorder that causes patchy hair loss ranging from diffuse thinning to extensive areas of baldness with islands of retained hair.
- Scarring alopecia—hair loss due to scarring of the scalp. A common cause of scarring alopecia is persistent tight braiding or corn-rowing of scalp hair. Over a period of time scarring may destroy hair follicles

- and result in permanent hair loss. More severe scarring alopecia may be caused by physical cutting-ripping-tearing injury to scalp skin or burn injury.
- ___. Telogen effluvium—a relatively common type of hair loss caused when a large percentage of scalp hair follicles are shifted into “shedding” phase. An underlying cause may be hormonal, nutritional, or drug-associated.
 - ___. Loose-anagen syndrome—a condition that occurs primarily in fair-haired persons. Scalp hair sits loosely in hair follicles and is easily extracted by normal combing or brushing. In some cases the condition appears during childhood and improves in later life.
 - ___. Triangular alopecia—a loss of hair in the frontal area of the scalp that sometimes begins in childhood. Hair loss may be complete in the frontal area or a few hairs may remain. The frontal hair loss can look similar to early-stage AGA. The cause of triangular alopecia is not known but it can be successfully treated.
 - ___. Trichotillomania—compulsive hair plucking. The condition ranges from idly plucking hair while reading or watching TV to ritualistic plucking of hair in specific patterns. Over time, trichotillomania can cause scarring alopecia and permanent hair loss. Hair loss due to trichotillomania usually cannot be successfully treated until underlying psychological or emotional conditions are treated successfully.

Scalp infections—bacteria, fungi and viruses can invade and damage hair follicles, causing hair loss. The infection must be diagnosed and treated before hair restoration can be undertaken.