



## Lesser Known Homoeopathic Medicines of Alopecia Areata

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### Abstract

Alopecia is the general medical term for hair loss and Alopecia areata is a type of Alopecia where hairless patches develop on the scalp or any hairy part of the skin. It is a chronic autoimmune disorder that causes nonscarring hair loss and may present at any age but most commonly noted in early childhood and adulthood. Alopecia areata is an internal disease that needs to be treated through internal immune-correction which is possible with homeopathy. Homeopathic medicines have the capacity to trigger the body's immune system in order to fight back the disease effectively in an individual. In this article we review Alopecia areata, its aetiology, pathophysiology, types, clinical features, diagnosis and some lesser known homoeopathic medicines of Alopecia areata.

**Key word-** Alopecia, Alopecia Areata, Pathophysiology, General Management, Homeopathic Medicines.

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### INTRODUCTION

Alopecia areata is an autoimmune disease characterised by patchy hair loss on the scalp, beard, eyebrows, eyelashes, private parts or any hairy part of the body. The term 'alopecia' is derived from a Latin word which means baldness and the word 'areata' refers to the patchy hair loss

which is a typical symptom of this disease. Bald patches are usually circular or oval size of coin.

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Unlike other kinds of alopecia, it is a reversible hair loss as the follicles of hair are not damaged. The disease manifests in patients who exhibit no other dermatological illnesses and are otherwise healthy. Patients suffering from certain allergies, asthma and hypothyroidism tend to show higher incidence of Alopecia areata. As much as 1.5 percent of the world population is diagnosed with Alopecia areata. Men and women are equally affected by the disease, as are all ethnicities and races. Approx five million Americans currently experience some form of the disease. It is an autoimmune disease, means a condition where the body attacks its own immune system, that needs to be treated through internal immune-correction which is possible with homeopathy. Homeopathy is safe and highly effective in most cases of alopecia areata, particularly to the early-detected cases and mild to moderate cases. About half of patients recover from alopecia areata within 1 year, but many will experience more than one episode. Around 10 percent of people will go on to develop alopecia totalis or alopecia universalis.

**Aetiology-** The condition occurs when white blood cells attack the cells in hair follicles, causing them to shrink and dramatically slow down hair production. It is unknown precisely what causes the

body's immune system to target hair follicles in this way. While scientists are unsure why these changes occur, it seems that genetics are involved as alopecia areata is more likely to occur in a person who has a close family member with the disease. One in five people with the disease has a family member who has also developed alopecia areata.

Other research has found that many people with a family history of alopecia areata also have a personal or family history of other autoimmune disorders, such as atopy, thyroiditis, and vitiligo.

Very little scientific evidence to support the view that alopecia areata is caused by stress. Extreme cases of stress could potentially trigger the condition, but most recent research points toward a genetic cause.

### **Types**

- 1. Alopecia Areata (patchy)-** This type of alopecia areata is having one or more coin-sized patches of hair loss on the skin or body. When this condition expands, it may become alopecia totalis or alopecia universalis.
- 2. Alopecia Totalis -** Alopecia totalis occurs when you have loss of hair over the whole scalp.
- 3. Alopecia Universalis -** In this type, a complete hair loss occurs all over the body including the scalp, eyebrows,

eyelashes, beard, armpits, and pubic hair.

4. **Diffuse alopecia areata** - It may look like female- or male-pattern hair loss. It results in sudden and unexpected thinning of hair all over the scalp, not in just one area or patch.
5. **Ophiasis alopecia** - It occurs a type of, hair loss that follows a band along the sides and lower back of the scalp is called ophiasis alopecia.

### Pathophysiology

The exact pathophysiology of alopecia areata remains unknown. The most widely accepted hypothesis is that alopecia areata is a T-cell-mediated autoimmune condition that is most likely to occur in genetically predisposed individuals.

**Autoimmunity-** Much evidence supports the hypothesis that alopecia areata is an autoimmune condition. The process appears to be T-cell mediated, but antibodies directed to hair follicle structures also have been found with increased frequency in alopecia areata patients compared with control subjects. Using immunofluorescence, antibodies to anagen-phase hair follicles were found in as many as 90% of patients with alopecia areata compared with less than 37% of control subjects. The autoantibody response is heterogeneous and targets

multiple structures of the anagen-phase hair follicle. The outer root sheath is the structure targeted most frequently, followed by the inner root sheath, the matrix, and the hair shaft. Whether these antibodies play a direct role in the pathogenesis or whether they are an epiphenomenon is not known.

Regulatory T-cells CD8+ lymphocytes likely play a prominent role in alopecia areata.

Histologically, lesional biopsy findings of alopecia areata show a perifollicular lymphocytic infiltrate around anagen-phase hair follicles. The infiltrate consists mostly of T-helper cells and, to a lesser extent, T-suppressor cells. CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> lymphocytes likely play a prominent role because the depletion of these T-cell subtypes results in complete or partial regrowth of hair in the Dundee experimental bald rat (DEBR) model of alopecia areata. The animals subsequently lose hair again once the T-cell population is replete. The fact that not all animals experience complete regrowth suggests that other mechanisms likely are involved. Total numbers of circulating T lymphocytes have been reported at both decreased and normal levels.

Clinical evidence favoring autoimmunity suggests that alopecia areata is associated with other autoimmune

conditions, the most significant of which are thyroid diseases and vitiligo .

**Genetics** - Many factors favor a genetic predisposition for alopecia areata. The frequency of positive family history for alopecia areata in affected patients has been estimated to be 10-20% compared with 1.7% in control subjects. The incidence is higher in patients with more severe disease (16-18%) compared with patients with localized alopecia areata (7-13%).

**Viral Etiology-** Other hypotheses have been proposed to explain the pathophysiology of alopecia areata, but more evidence is needed to support them. Alopecia areata was believed to possibly have an infectious origin, But no microbial agent has been isolated consistently in patients. Many efforts have been made to isolate cytomegalovirus, but most studies have been negative.

### **Sign and Symptoms**

- Loss of hairs from scalp, and body.
- The most prominent symptom of alopecia areata is patchy hair loss. Coin-sized patches of hair begin to fall out, mainly from the scalp. Any site of hair growth may be affected, though, including the beard and eyelashes.
- The loss of hair can be sudden, developing in just a few days or over a period of a few weeks.

- There may be itching or burning in the area prior to hair loss. The hair follicles are not destroyed and so hair can re-grow if the inflammation of the follicles subsides.
- People who experience just a few patches of hair loss often have a spontaneous, full recovery without any form of treatment.
- About 30 percent of individuals who develop alopecia areata find that their condition either becomes more extensive or becomes a continuous cycle of hair loss and regrowth.
- Alopecia areata can also affect the fingernails and toenails, and sometimes these changes are the first sign that the condition is developing.

There are a number of small changes that can occur to nails:

**Changes in Nails-** Pinpoint dents appear, White spots and lines appear, Nails become rough thin, split & lose their shine

### **Additional Clinical Signs Include:**

**Exclamation mark hairs** - Where a few short hairs that get narrower at their bottom and grow in or around the edges of bald spots,

**Cadaver hairs** - Hairs broken before reaching the skin surface, Regrowth of white hair in areas affected by hair loss.

### Complications Of Alopecia

- Affects the quality of life, Reduces self esteem
- Withdrawal from society and depression

### Method Of Measuring Alopecia

We have developed a quantitative method for measuring hair growth using optical microscopy and image analysis, and have used this to investigate the rate of growth in subjects with and without alopecia. The hairs were cut from an area 7–8 mm in diameter and 24 h and 72 h later, images of the areas were obtained using an optical microscope and were recorded on a video disc. Measurements of the regrowing hairs, placed parallel to the scalp using a glass slide attached to the front of the microscope, were made using the image analyser.

In subjects with little or no baldness there was a clear difference between fast-growing hairs and resting or slow-growing hairs. However, in subjects with alopecia there was no such difference and the growth rate of all the hairs showed a continuous distribution. Using this method other parameters such as the number of hairs per unit area and hair diameter as well as grouping of the hairs could be measured.

**Diagnosis** - Alopecia areata is diagnosed through a medical history and physical

examination. Doctor will ask you questions about your hair loss, look at the pattern of your hair loss, and examine your scalp. And he or she may tug gently on a few hairs or pull some out.

If the reason for your hair loss is not clear, your doctor may do tests to check for a disease that could be causing your hair loss. Tests include: Blood tests, such as thyroid function tests (hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism), blood sugar levels, iron levels, C reactive protein and others, might be performed to rule out any other autoimmune disease.

**Differential Diagnosis-** Alopecic patches have unusual shapes and sizes and show broken hairs; no inflammation or epidermal change occurs. A scalp biopsy can be helpful if the diagnosis is difficult clinically. The diagnosis is suggested by erythema, scaling, and crusting locally on the scalp. These can be differentiated by the absence of follicular ostia or some degree of atrophy. Syphilis rarely is seen but should be suspected in patients at high risk or with other signs or symptoms. Differentiating telogen effluvium from diffuse alopecia areata is difficult in the absence of an obvious precipitating factor that can result in telogen effluvium. Noting hair loss on other hair-bearing areas can be helpful and favors a diagnosis of alopecia areata.

Some other differential diagnoses are:

- Androgenetic alopecia, Male/ Female Pattern Baldness
- Brocqpseudopelade, Pediatric syphilis
- Discoid Lupus Erythematosus, SLE
- Telogen effluvium, Tineacapitis and Trichotillomania.

### **Conventional Treatment**

In Modern medicine, The most common form of alopecia areata treatment is the use of Ointments, Injections, Oral Immuno suppressants, and Hair Transplants therapy for the alopecia areata have been used for many years. Other medications that can be prescribed that either promote hair growth or affect the immune system include Minoxidil, Anthralin, SADBE, and DPCP. Although some of these may help with the re-growth of hair, they cannot prevent the formation of new bald patches.

### **General Management**

As conventional treatments for alopecia are very limited, studies that support natural treatments for alopecia are even thinner on the ground. There are somemanagement recommendation for alopecia areata like healthy diet with rubbing onion or garlic juice, almond oil, rosemary oil, cooled green tea, honey, or coconut milk into the scalp.

### **Some Lesser Known Homoeopathic Medicines-**

Homeopathic treatment is safe and very effective in alopecia areata. Alopecia areata is an autoimmune disease that needs to be treated through internal immune-correction which is possible with homeopathy. Homeopathic medicines for Alopecia Areata help to control the symptoms without any side effects. The homeopathic treatment goes into the roots of the disease and corrects underlying cause of related problems; there by stimulates hair growth. According to the principles of Homoeopathy, which is based on dynamisation and focuses on the physical as well as the psychological wellbeing of the patient, well indicated constitutional remedy on the basis of totality of symptoms can work well. Medicines such as Lycopodium, Phosphorus, Thuja, Natrummuriaticum, Graphites, Sepia, Mezereum, etc. have a great effect if given on the basis of similarity and are also the prescription of majority of cases for Alopecia Areata.

When the polychrest or constitutional remedies are not indicated or fail to relieve in the case, then the indigenous, rare, and other medicines could be considered. There are some rare medicines which also have tremendous effects in cases of Alopecia

Areata but are usually untouched by the prescribers. Characteristics symptoms of lesser known homeopathic medicines for Alopecia Areata are:

- 1. Mancinella** - Mancinella is an excellent homeopathic medicine for alopecia areata. When Itching in the scalp with sticky discharge and formation of the crusts. Silent mood and self consciousness. Head feeling light and empty. Characteristics symptoms of mancinnellais falling of hair after acute sickness.
- 2. Vinca Minor-** It is an another useful homeopathic medicine for alopecia areata. It works well in cases where there is a tendency for hair to fall in spots which are then replaced by white hair. Along with this, itching and violent scratching over the scalp may also be present.
- 3. Fluoric Acid** - Fluoric Acid is also a highly suitable homeopathic medicine for hair fall after fever. Fluoric Acid is among the top grade homeopathic remedies for alopecia areata. It helps in the regrowth of hair in the bald patches.
- 4. Jaborandi-** Jaborandi, is most useful homeopathic medicine for alopecia areata. It has been used as a remedy for baldness with excessive perspiration from all parts of the body.
- 5. Selenium-** Selenium is an excellent homeopathic medicine for alopecia areata. It works well in cases of alopecia areata where Hair falls out from eyebrows, beard, genitals and any hairy part of the body. Acne, Seborrhœoleosa, comedones with an oily surface of the skin.
- 6. Phosphoric Acid-** Phosphoric Acid is among the top grade homeopathic remedies for alopecia areata. Any sort of grief leading to hair fall. Early graying of hair with Progressive thinning of hair, Difficult comprehension of things. Patient lives in the state of shock for long. and Craves juicy things.
- 7. Syphillinum-** Syphillinum is one of the best homeopathic medicine for alopecia areata. Hair loss with linear pains from temple across, or from eyes backward; cause sleeplessness and delirium at night. Stupefying cephalagia. Hair falls profusely. Tubercles all over the scalp.
- 8. Ceanothus Americanus-** Ceanothus Americanus is most clinically used homeopathic medicine to prevent hair loss. Anaemic patients where liver and spleen are at fault with periodical neuralgia.
- 9. Arnica Montana-** Arnica montana is widely used herbal and homeopathic

medicine for hair growth stimulation. It rejuvenates the scalp, stimulates the hair follicles by improving the blood flow, and prevent premature hair fall.

**10. Pix Liquida** - Pix liquidais one of the most important homeopathic medicine for alopecia areata, where hair loss and bronchial irritation after influenza. The skin symptoms it treats are the most important factor itching, cracked and bleeding on scratching. Hair fall with scaly eruptions on scalp.

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