HAIR LOSS

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OVERVIEW

Hair loss, also known as alopecia, refers to the partial or complete loss of hair from the scalp or other areas of the body. It can occur gradually or suddenly, affecting both men and women. While some degree of hair loss is a natural part of the hair growth cycle, excessive hair loss can be a cause for concern.

CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS:

Several factors can contribute to hair loss, including genetics, hormonal changes, medical conditions (including autoimmune diseases and nutritional deficiencies), certain medications, lifestyle factors (stress and poor diet) as well as excessive hairstyling or harsh hair treatments.

TYPES OF HAIR LOSS:

Medically, hair loss is divided into three main categories:

1. **Scaring hair loss (cicatricial alopecia)**

These conditions generally result in permanent hair loss if not treated early due to irreversible damage to the hair follicle. The damage is usually as a result of inflammatory conditions affecting the hair follicle.

2. **Nonscarring hair loss (nonscarring alopecia)**

These conditions are usually identifiable by the typical pattern and distribution of the hair loss. Some of these conditions can improve spontaneously, or with treatment. Examples include Male pattern hair loss (androgenic alopecia in men), female pattern hair loss, alopecia areata (hair loss typically in patches) and trichotillomania (or traction alopecia, where hair is pulled in bizarre patterns and is essentially an anxiety or psychiatric disorder).

3. **Inherited and acquired structural hair disorders.**

Fragile hair can be genetic, or due to damaging haircare techniques.

Each type of hair loss has its unique characteristics and may require specific approaches for diagnosis and treatment.

SYMPTOMS:

The most obvious symptom of hair loss is the noticeable thinning or loss of hair on the scalp or other body parts. Individuals may also experience a receding hairline, bald patches, or excessive shedding. Additionally, hair loss can lead to psychological distress, such as low self-esteem and reduced confidence.

DIAGNOSIS:

Diagnosing the underlying cause of hair loss involves a comprehensive evaluation by a healthcare professional. The expertise of a specialist (usually a dermatologist) may be required to help diagnose the precise cause The doctor may review the patient's medical history, perform a physical examination, and order additional tests, such as blood tests or a scalp biopsy. Microscopic examination of cut or plucked hair fibres may also be required. These tests help identify any underlying medical conditions, hormone imbalances, or nutritional deficiencies contributing to hair loss.

TREATMENT:

The treatment options for hair loss depend on the underlying cause and the type of hair loss experienced. For androgenetic alopecia, medications like "Minoxidil" and "Finasteride" may be prescribed to slow down hair loss and promote regrowth. Hair transplant surgery and laser therapy are other treatment options available for certain individuals. In cases of temporary hair loss, addressing the underlying cause, such as managing stress or adjusting medications, may lead to hair regrowth.

PREVENTION AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES:

While not all types of hair loss are preventable, certain lifestyle changes and preventive measures can help maintain healthy hair. These include adopting a balanced diet rich in vitamins

and minerals, avoiding excessive heat or chemical treatments, protecting the hair from harsh environmental factors, managing stress levels, and avoiding tight hairstyles that pull on the hair. Regular hair care routines and gentle handling can also promote hair health.

Hair loss can have a significant impact on a person's well-being and self-confidence. Understanding the causes, symptoms, diagnosis methods, treatment options, and preventive measures can empower individuals to take control of their hair health. Consulting with a healthcare professional and adopting appropriate strategies can help manage hair loss effectively. Remember, each individual's experience with hair loss is unique, and it's essential to seek personalized advice for a comprehensive approach to treatment and care.

Please note: this is an education information leaflet only and should not be used for diagnosis. For more information on **Hair Loss**, consult your healthcare professional.

References: 1. American Academy of Dermatology Association. (2021). Hair loss. Retrieved from https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/hair-loss **2.** Mayo Clinic. (2021). Hair loss. Retrieved from https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hair-loss/symptoms-causes/syc-20372926 3. American Hair Loss Association. (n.d.). Women's hair loss: Introduction. Retrieved from https://www.americanhairloss.org/women_hair_loss/introduction.html **3.** British Association of Dermatologists. (2018). Hair loss. Retrieved from https://www.bad.org.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?id=233&itemtype=document **4.** Cleveland Clinic. (2021). Hair loss in women. Retrieved from https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/16941-hair-loss-in-women **5.** Harvard Health Publishing. (2018). Treating female pattern hair loss. Retrieved from https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/treating-female-pattern-hair-loss **6.** American Academy of Dermatology Association. (2021). Hair loss: Diagnosis and treatment. Retrieved from https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/hair-loss/diagnosis-treatment **7.** Mayo Clinic. (2021). Hair loss: Lifestyle and home remedies. Retrieved from https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hair-loss/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20372932

Please note that these references provide additional information and resources related to hair loss.