

Alopecia areata

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In news—Pinkett Smith, wife of actor Will Smith was in news recently as she has been suffering from a condition known as alopecia areata.

What is alopecia areata?

- Alopecia areata is a **condition that causes sudden hair loss in patches.**
- The **condition is developed after the immune system attacks the hair follicles, resulting in hair loss,** which cannot be observed easily.
- These patches connect and then become observable.
- **Not just the scalp, sudden hair fall may also occur in other parts of the body** like beard, mustache, underarms etc.
- **It may also develop slowly and occur again periodically or repeatedly after years between instances.**
- It mostly occurs in people who have a **family history of auto-immune conditions,** such as diabetes and thyroid.
- Different types of alopecia are-
 1. **Cicatricial alopecia (non-reversible):** It results in **scarring of the skin and permanent hair loss.** This happens due to lichen planopilaris, trauma, burn, infections, and congenital conditions.
 2. **Non-cicatricial alopecia (reversible):** **Hair loss can be reversed with no scarring of the skin.** Other conditions like androgenetic alopecia (AGA) or male pattern baldness, female pattern baldness, and systemic infection are examples of non-cicatricial alopecia.
- While alopecia areata, traction alopecia and tinea capitis are the common types of baldness in males,

androgenetic alopecia, telogen effluvium, anagen effluvium, alopecia areata, and traction alopecia result in baldness in females.

- Alopecia Areata is **not a contagious condition** and nor does it directly make people sick through the condition.

Treatment for alopecia-

- According to experts, alopecia areata **can be treated using both medical and natural treatment methods.**
- Medical treatment includes topical agents, injections, oral treatments and light therapy.
- Substances such as zinc and biotin, aloe vera drinks and topical gels, and onion juice are sometimes recommended to be rubbed into the scalp.
- Oils like tea tree, rosemary, lavender, and peppermint, as well as coconut, castor, olive and jojoba oil can be helpful.
- An anti-inflammatory diet, which mainly includes meats and vegetables, scalp massages, herbal supplements such as ginseng, green tea, and Chinese hibiscus, etc, are also used to treat alopecia areata.

Common causes of baldness in both men and women are-

Hereditary or genetic factors, Aging, Loss of essential nutrients & improper diet, Psychological pressure and anxiety, Hormonal changes during puberty, pregnancy, and menopause, Chronic illnesses or auto-immune diseases, Hormonal disorders such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), which affects women of reproductive age, Environmental factors like pollution, dust, etc.