

**Patient
Information**

Minoxidil for hair loss

Introduction

This leaflet provides information about treatment for pattern hair loss which has the medical name androgenetic alopecia.

What is pattern hair loss?

Androgenetic alopecia is the most common type of hair loss and can affect both men and women.

It is known as pattern hair loss because there are clearly recognised sequences which follow for most people with this condition.

In men, hair loss usually begins above the temples causing a receding hairline. This progressing hair loss continues on the top of the head leading to increasingly thin hair then often to baldness.

In women, androgenetic alopecia begins with gradual thinning at the midline parting, followed by increasing diffuse hair loss/thinning from the top of the head. A woman's hairline rarely recedes and women rarely become bald.

What is minoxidil treatment?

Minoxidil is a tablet originally used in larger doses to treat high blood pressure. In smaller doses swallowed (orally) it has been found to increase the blood flow to the hair roots. This then enables hairs to grow for longer and new hair starts to grow more quickly.

Minoxidil solution has been used successfully in treating people with hair loss for a variety of reasons, such as:

- people who have finished chemotherapy treatments which caused hair loss.
- female pattern hair loss.
- fragile hair disorders.

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Dermatology

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Which minoxidil treatment will I be given?

Before any treatment you will be assessed by a member of the hair specialist team. They will decide with you, the treatment plan and the dose needed.

While you are receiving minoxidil treatment you should have your pulse and blood pressure monitored regularly by your GP.

Minoxidil is available as a 2.5 milligrams (mg) tablet. At lower doses it can still stimulate hair growth but side effects are kept to a minimum.

Oral minoxidil doses vary between 0.625mg up to 2.5mg. To achieve the dose of 0.625mg you are required to use a pill cutter, cutting the tablet in to quarters. You will start on a 0.625mg dose on alternate days; any further changes to the dose will be discussed in your follow up consultations.

Minoxidil foam (Regain[®]) is the only licenced treatment for female and male pattern hair loss. This is a topical solution (applied to the skin) and can be bought over the counter.

Possible side effects of minoxidil

Minoxidil is generally well tolerated and most people experience no side effects. It is therefore unlikely that on the low dose minoxidil you will experience any side-effects. However, on higher doses of minoxidil the following side-effects have been experienced:

- Fluid retention (causing weight gain and/or ankle swelling)
- Increased heart rate and palpitations
- Chest pain and/or shortness of breath
- Low blood pressure causing dizziness and fainting
- Increased face and body hair growth
- Skin rashes
- Nausea and vomiting
- Breast tenderness
- Blood test abnormalities.

**Patient
Information****Important points to consider**

When starting minoxidil some people experience an increase in the hair shedding cycle. This usually settles within the first 6 weeks of treatment.

This treatment is not advised for individuals who are already on medication to reduce their blood pressure (anti-hypertensive medication).

Because alcohol lowers the blood pressure, we recommend that you reduce any intake during oral minoxidil treatment.

Currently there is no evidence to confirm minoxidil is safe to use if you are trying to conceive, pregnant or when breastfeeding. For this reason, we would not suggest this treatment to women in this group.

As with all medication, we recommend that you read the patient information leaflet enclosed in the packet.

Contact information**Dr Takwale's secretary**

Tel: 0300 422 5396

Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 3:00pm

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>