



Alopecia Areata is no Laughing Matter

Recent media attention has put alopecia in the spotlight and has people talking about this condition more than ever. Alopecia areata is an autoimmune skin disease that affects 14.7 million people worldwide and affects people of all ages, ethnicity, and gender. With all forms of alopecia areata, the body's immune system attacks healthy hair follicles, causing them to become much smaller and drastically slow down or completely stop hair production. It can cause hair loss on the scalp, face, and sometimes on other areas of the body.



Though the symptoms of alopecia areata typically do not cause physical pain, many people with the condition can experience emotional, or psychological, pain. Proper treatment of the physical presentation of alopecia can also help to reduce the feelings of grief, anxiety, loss, fear, embarrassment, loneliness, and anger.

Due to the complexity of the condition, finding the right treatment option with minimal side effects is key. Corticosteroids are most commonly prescribed as the first line of treatment because they are potent anti-inflammatory drugs that suppress the functions of the immune system. Long-term use of corticosteroids is not recommended due to undesirable side effects, such as high blood pressure and fluid retention. Other commonly prescribed medications can include minoxidil, anthralin, and cepharranthin. If traditional therapies are not successful or cause an individual additional discomfort, then other therapies need to be explored. Compounded medications allow treatments to be customized for the individual, meaning the combination of ingredients, dose, and dosage form can be tailored to the person.

Our compounding pharmacy can offer innovative solutions that have provided favorable results and reduced unwanted side effects in the treatment of alopecia areata. Here are some options to consider beyond conventional therapies:

- Diphenylprone (DPCP) is a topical immunotherapeutic agent. It essentially functions by creating a minor allergic reaction that causes the immune system to attack it instead of the hair follicles. This treatment was most successful with people suffering from alopecia areata for less than 10 years and specifically patchy alopecia.
- Low Dose Naltrexone (LDN) is an opioid antagonist that causes an increased endorphin and enkephalin release that lowers the level of pro-inflammatory proteins in the blood. This in turn helps with immune-cell regulation and hair regrowth.
- Squaric acid dibutylester (SADBE) is also a topical immunotherapeutic agent and functions similarly to DPCP.

When treating alopecia, it is important to seek a viable medication solution that will offer long-lasting results. Options should be discussed with your doctor and our knowledgeable compounding pharmacist.

Our compounding pharmacy can compound topical treatment options for various types of hair loss, not just alopecia areata, but androgenetic alopecia in men, female pattern hair loss, frontal fibrosing alopecia, and chemotherapy-induced hair loss. Talk to our pharmacist about your

specific condition and we can work with you and your physician to formulate a treatment option specifically for you.

References:

<https://www.naaf.org>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2230.2006.02256.x>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29273103/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31767273/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25889130/>

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