

What if you start to lose more hair when you begin using minoxidil?

Some people with androgenetic alopecia have large numbers of hairs in the resting phase in their scalp. Occasionally, on starting minoxidil people will get a rapid reactivation of the follicle which starts to produce new hairs. If this occurs all the old hairs are pushed out at the same time causing you to notice the shedding of these hairs. This occurs do not panic, it is a good sign and it will usually stop within six months. It indicates that the minoxidil is having an effect on your follicles, reawakening them and stimulating the growth of new hairs.

What happens when you stop minoxidil?

Androgenetic alopecia is a genetic condition. Treatment with minoxidil does not alter your genetic tendencies to develop baldness but it will delay the balding process for as long as you use the lotion. Once you stop the medication the balding process will continue at the same rate as if you had never taken the medication. In addition, the hair that have regrown as a result of the minoxidil will fall out within 3 to 6 months.

Sometimes this hair shedding on stopping the treatment is used as a means of monitoring whether the treatment is effective. If at the end of 12 months the treatment is stopped and no shedding is noticed, then it probably isn't working and should be abandoned. On the other hand if you notice shedding on ceasing the minoxidil that indicated it is helping and it should therefore be continued indefinitely.

What Happens to your body hair?

Minoxidil will grow hair wherever it is applied and so unless you want a hairy forehead or ears, you need to be careful to apply it only to the scalp.

In Summary

Minoxidil is a very safe medication that will stop the balding process in about two thirds of the men who use it and, in a proportion of those men, it will induce regrowth of hair.

Where To Look for Help

Your Local Doctor should be the first person you see. He or she will be able to advise you on the appropriate medications to use or specialist to see.

Be sure to check any new treatments you are about to use with your doctor. There are many bogus treatments out there, most of them are expensive but relatively harmless.

Our website also has other information.

www alopecia.com.au

The Australasian Hair and Wool Research Society
Department of Dermatology
St. Vincent's Hospital
41 Victoria Parade
Fitzroy VIC 3065

The Skin and Cancer Foundation (VIC)
95 Rathdowne Street
Carlton VIC 3053

Using

Minoxidil



minoxidil (REGAINE) has been licensed in Australia for the treatment of hair loss for over ten years. Large multi-centred trials were conducted in Australia and internationally which confirmed that Minoxidil is effective for the treatment of some men with male pattern baldness as well as some women with female pattern baldness.

The effect of minoxidil on hair was discovered fortuitously. Minoxidil was originally developed in a tablet form for the treatment of high blood pressure. Unexpectedly patients taking this tablet grew hair on their face, ears and body. In addition some bald men also grew hair on their scalp.

Further research led to the development of a lotion form of minoxidil that when applied to the scalp was able to grow hair on the scalp. In addition the minoxidil is not absorbed into the blood in sufficient amount to lower the blood pressure or cause any side effects. The only side effects found after over 10 years of use are irritation of the scalp from the alcohol base and the exceptional case of a skin allergy.

Initially only a 2% solution was available as higher concentrations were unstable. Recently these problems have been overcome and a 5% solution is now available.

Currently a prescription is only required for the 5% solution and the 2% solution is available over the counter at pharmacies. The main difference between the two solutions is the delay in the onset of action.

With the 2% solution there is usually a delay of 6 to 12 months before any effect is detected. With the 5% solution the benefit is usually seen within 4 months.

we recommend that all people start on the 5% solution for the 1st six months and then change to the 2% solution.

From the trials it is hard to determine exactly what proportion of patients benefit from minoxidil as the data

was presented in a different fashion. Extrapolating from the available data, about 60% of people who use it will notice a reduction or cessation of hair shedding, about 15% of people will notice hair regrowth and about 35% of people will continue to lose hair at the same rate.

It is possible to partially predict those men who will derive the most benefit from the minoxidil. Those with early androgenetic alopecia do better than those with advanced hair loss. In addition those who have only noticed the balding for 5 years or less seem to benefit more.

Not everyone with androgenetic alopecia notices an increase in hair shedding. Many are aware that their hairline is receding or their hair is thinning, but don't actually see the hairs falling out or in their comb or pillow. For these people, monitoring whether the minoxidil is working or not is more difficult.

The hair that regrows with minoxidil may resemble the hair that was lost or may be finer thinner hairs. The medical name for these hairs is indeterminate hairs. Some people who only regrow indeterminate hairs may be left unsatisfied.

How to apply minoxidil

The lotion comes in a bottle with a dropper marked with a 1ml level. The aim is to apply 1ml twice a day which is about 20 drops. The minoxidil should be applied to the entire top of the scalp and **not just to the bald patch**. The reason for this is that the treatment is primarily preventative. It is directed at protecting the vulnerable hairs of the crown from disappearing, and secondarily aimed at regrowing hair in the bald patch.

To apply 20 drops it is best to create 4 parts in the scalp and apply 5 drops down the line of each part, directly onto the scalp. After each set of 5 drops the lotion should be massaged into the scalp. The hair should be dry when the lotion is applied. The lotion may leave the hair with a tacky feel if applied to the hair rather than the scalp. The procedure takes about 5 minutes and should be done

twice a day.

What to look for when you start minoxidil:

The main aim of taking minoxidil is to stop going bald. If you have already started to go bald then minoxidil will prevent you losing more hair. This means that when you start using minoxidil you are not looking for a change and you expect your hair will look the same at the end of each year, as the balding process will have been arrested. On the other hand if you don't use minoxidil you will expect to have less hair at the end of each year.

Some people using minoxidil will actually regrow hair. In exceptional cases you may notice this as early as four months but it usually takes up to twelve months before any regrowth is noticed. Even then, only about 10% of the people using minoxidil will have grown enough hair that their friends and families will be able to notice it.

If hair regrowth does occur it is a bonus but it is important to remember the main aim of treatment is to prevent you losing more hair.

How do I tell if minoxidil is working?

In general, we recommend that all women receiving treatment for Androgenetic Alopecia have photographs taken of their scalp every 6 months. Ordinary photographs are generally not sufficient to enable us to detect subtle changes in the amount of hair on your scalp. There is a professional medical photographer at the Skin and Cancer Foundation on Mondays and Wednesdays that can take these photographs of your scalp. You will be given a print on the spot which you should bring along with you to your doctor's appointment. The cost of these photographs is \$40 and is not rebatable on Medicare.