

ALOPECIA AREATA IS MORE THAN JUST HAIR LOSS

Alopecia areata can have a significant impact on mental health and productivity.



Alopecia areata:

- is an autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks hair follicles at the root, leading to bald patches or total hair loss on the scalp, eyebrows, eye lashes or anywhere body hair grows;
- is similar to other autoimmune conditions like psoriasis or atopic dermatitis;
- is different than male pattern baldness, which is more prevalent in men, and is caused by a combination of genetics and hormones, leading to non-patchy hair loss;
- affects approximately **2%** of Canadians—of all genders and agesⁱ; and
- impacts the working age population, with **40%** of patients diagnosed by age 20 and **80%** diagnosed by age 40ⁱⁱ.

The psychosocial effects of hair loss can be devastating. Patients with alopecia areata reported:

- spending an average of **10.3** hours per week concealing their hair lossⁱⁱⁱ;
- **95%** felt uncomfortable or self-conscious^{iv};
- **65.2%** avoided social situations^v;
- **85%** found coping with alopecia areata a daily challenge^{vi};
- **62%** made significant life decisions that negatively redirected the trajectory of their lives^{vii};
- **47%** reported anxiety and/or depression^{viii};
- **40%** of children with alopecia areata reported being bullied and **50%** limited their participation in activities and had prolonged absences from school^{ix}; and
- **40%** of women with alopecia areata experienced marital issues and **63%** experienced career issues^x.

A recent Canadian survey of group benefits plan sponsors^{xv} indicated that:

- **80%** felt alopecia areata impacts employee productivity and should be covered by group health benefits plans; and
- **90%** thought coverage for potential alopecia areata treatments should be treated like other autoimmune conditions like psoriasis or atopic dermatitis.

Workplace impact of alopecia areata

45% reported missing work^{xi}

57% reported work impairment^{xii}

56% higher risk of absenteeism^{xiii}

Treatments:

- no medications are currently approved by Health Canada to treat alopecia areata;
- current medications are used off label and might not be appropriate for long-term use; and
- discontinuation of current medications are common due to lack of efficacy and negative side effects^{xiv}.



References

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- xv Benefits Canada survey - data on file.

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