

### **FINASTERIDE (PROPECIA)**

Finasteride (Propecia) is an oral medicine, which was originally developed for prostate problems in men. Men who took this medicine noticed increased hair growth on their bald scalps. Because of this, more research was done into this medication and it has been found to be helpful for men with hair loss.

Finasteride is a 5 alpha reductase inhibitor, which means it prevents the action of the 5 alpha reductase enzyme. This enzyme changes testosterone into its active form. The active form of testosterone causes hair loss in balding men. Finasteride blocks the 5 alpha reductase in the skin so that the hair is less likely to fall out.

Recent studies show that 1 mg. of Finasteride taken daily for at least six months may promote hair growth in the balding areas.

Finasteride is not to be taken by children and women of childbearing potential. If a woman who was using this medication became pregnant, there would be potential serious effects for the developing baby. There is also a theoretical concern that enough of this medication can be absorbed during intercourse so that a man should not take this medication if he is actively trying to conceive a child.

The only significant side effect that has been associated with Finasteride is a very low incidence of impotence and decreased sexual drive. This is much more likely in the higher doses used to treat prostate problems. There is also a potential risk of Finasteride altering theophylline levels. If you are taking theophylline, please let me know.

Finasteride appears to be the most effective medical agent available for the treatment of common baldness. It seems to be even more effective when it is combined with the use of topical Rogaine. Improvement is slow and gradual. Unfortunately, there is no treatment, which provides uniformly effective and complete reversal of hair loss but at this stage; this is the best treatment available. If you have any questions regarding this treatment, please ask me before you leave the office.

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