

### **MALE-PATTERN BALDNESS (androgenetic alopecia)**

Male-pattern baldness is a specific type of hair loss characterized by gradual hair thinning that affects the crown and frontal areas of the scalp. Most often, the hairline around the temples slowly regresses, producing an M-shaped hair pattern in front. The hair in areas affected by hair loss consists of various lengths and thickness. Hair of uneven lengths and texture is the classic sign of male pattern balding.

A hair follicle is a structure that encases the lower part of the hair shaft and is responsible for new hair growth. All of a person's hair follicles are present at birth. Follicles produce single hair strands in a repetitive cycle. The growth phase lasts 2-3 years, upon which time, growth ceases and a resting phase ensues. After the resting phase is complete in 3-4 months, the hair is shed and the next growth cycle begins. It is normal for people to lose between 75-100 hairs per day.

In people with male pattern baldness, some of the hair follicles have a shorter than normal growth phase and produce hair shafts that are shorter and thinner. As time goes on, the hair becomes progressively shorter and thinner, until an area on the scalp develops that *appears* "bald". Baldness therefore is a progressive miniaturization of the hair each follicle produces. Since all of the follicles are still present there is always hope that this process can be reversed.

Male-pattern baldness occurs due to hormonal changes in the individual hair follicles themselves and is a result of a person's genetic make-up. However, it is very difficult to predict if an individual person will go bald because there are many different genes and factors inherited from *both parents* that may lead to the trait.

There are several medications and procedures for the treatment of male-pattern baldness. Minoxidil (Rogaine) is a liquid preparation applied directly to the scalp that promotes hair growth by lengthening the growth phase of hair follicles and causing more follicles to produce hair. Finasteride (Propecia) is a pill that is taken once a day by mouth. It works by inhibiting an enzyme that changes testosterone to its active form. The active form of testosterone causes hair loss in balding men. Finasteride may lead to an increased amount of hair covering more of the scalp. More in depth information on these medications is available in the office and will be provided for you if necessary.

Surgical options including hair transplantation and scalp reduction may be the preferred method of treatment for some patients. In hair transplantation, healthy hair follicles are moved from one part of the scalp to areas affected by baldness. In scalp reduction, bald patches of the scalp are removed and the remaining skin is sewn together.

If you have any questions regarding this condition, please ask me before you leave the office.