

Patient Information for Frontal Fibrosing Alopecia (FFA)

Overview

Frontal fibrosing alopecia (FFA) is a type of lichen planopilaris (LPP) that presents as slow, progressive hair loss and scarring on the scalp along the hairline near the forehead. The eyebrows and eyelashes may also be involved.

FFA hair loss is of the scarring type. The scarring replaces the entire unit of the hair follicle, including the stem cells needed to regenerate a new follicle, which means the hair cannot regrow.

The cause of FFA is not completely understood, but it is thought to be due to an autoimmune attack on the body's own hair follicles, destroying the stem cells of the hair follicle and leading to permanent hair loss. Hormonal, genetic, and environmental factors may also play a role.

Who's At Risk

FFA predominately affects Caucasian, postmenopausal women aged 55-60. Premenopausal women account for approximately 13% of cases, with men accounting for around 4% of cases. However, this can occur in younger women as well.

Signs & Symptoms

FFA typically presents as symmetric hairline recession in the front and sides of the hairline, as well as hair loss of the eyebrows. In severe cases, there may also be hair loss of the eyelashes and arms and legs. In addition, some patients may develop facial symptoms, such as facial redness and skin-colored bumps on the skin.

Self-Care Guidelines & When to Seek Medical Care

No over-the-counter products are effective for treatment. FFA can lead to irreversible hair loss, so it is important to visit a dermatologist if you are experiencing hair loss. The earlier therapy is started, the more success you will have at preventing continual permanent scarring hair loss. Treatment is focused on limiting the progression of the disease. Thus, early diagnosis and treatment are key to maximizing the likelihood of successful treatment. Hair transplantation success is dependent on the degree of scarring. Dr. Ekpo recommends patients with scarring hair loss that want to undergo hair transplantation to also get scalp micropigmentation (SMP), medical scalp tattooing, afterwards in the areas where the grafts are not able to take due to scarring. This will allow for beautiful results and the appearance of fuller hair when done in conjunction after hair transplantation. When you see a board-certified dermatologist, like Dr. Ekpo, you see a doctor who has the training, knowledge, and the expertise necessary to diagnose and treat your hair loss. Dr. Ekpo and her team can discuss a personalized hair restoration plan with you to help achieve your realistic hair goals.

