

## Patient Information for Traction Alopecia

### Overview

Traction alopecia (TA) is a condition of the scalp caused by trauma to the hair shaft due to prolonged, repetitive pulling / tension on the hair follicle. Grooming practices that cause TA include tight braiding, tight ponytails, sew-ins, glue-ins, quick weaves, heavy dreads, and excessive brushing, which weaken the hair shaft, resulting in damage and hair loss.

Removal of the tension can reverse the hair loss. This is ideal in the early stages, where the hair loss is non-scarring and nonpermanent.

Without treatment or with persistent trauma to the hair shaft, TA can result in permanent hair loss.



### Who's At Risk

While TA is not limited to a particular ethnicity / race or age group, it most often occurs in Black women due to grooming practices. Furthermore, coarse, thick, and easily tangled hair vigorously brushed or combed with a narrow toothed comb is another contributing factor in the development of TA.

TA is sometimes seen in ballet dancers; workers who wear headgear such as helmets, hair caps, and headbands; and individuals who wear certain religious attire (e.g., coifs and turbans).

### Signs & Symptoms

TA can present as a tender, itchy scalp and occasionally with associated headaches. TA can also present with inflamed bumps (inflammatory papules, pustules, and redness) and hair loss in areas where hair is pulled tightly. It usually affects the front and sides of the hairline but may appear in other sites on the scalp or in other body areas where there is pulling on the hair follicle.

### Self-Care Guidelines & When to Seek Medical Care

- Immediately stop hairstyles causing pain, swelling, redness, pimples, or hair loss.
- Avoid tight hairstyles or hair accessories causing pulling / trauma to the scalp.
- Limit wearing of hairstyles that cause tension to periods of 1-2 weeks, and ideally less than 24 hours.

The earlier TA is treated, the more success you will have at re-growing your hair. Long standing TA can result in scarring hair loss and permanent damage. 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. Many patients undergo hair transplantation with fantastic results. However, healthy hair practices and styles must be continued to prevent reoccurrence of TA. Dr. Ekpo can discuss a personalized hair restoration plan with you to help achieve your realistic hair goals.

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