**Patient Information for alopecia areata**

**Overview**

Alopecia areata is an autoimmune condition resulting in patchy hair loss. The immune system of the body mistakenly stops hair growth for

unknown reasons. Hair loss may involve the rest of the body in addition to the scalp. Hair in some people may spontaneously regrow, though recurrences of the condition are also typical. Genetic and environmental factors play a role in hair loss; the condition may be seasonal as well.

Many patients confess that when they first noticed patches of hair loss, they tried to hide them. They didn’t want to tell anyone and hoped their hair would grow back. Their bald patches also left them wondering whether they had cancer or another life-threatening disease. Having alopecia areata is not a sign of cancer. In fact, many people who have alopecia areata are otherwise healthy.

**Who′s At Risk**

Alopecia areata can occur in people of all ages. The most frequent association is with thyroid disease, although this form of hair loss can be found in those with lupus, lichen planus, vitiligo, and down syndrome.

**Signs & Symptoms**

Alopecia areata most commonly occurs on the scalp, but it can also target the eyebrows, eyelashes, beard, and other body sites. Symptoms may include the following:

* Round, patchy areas of non-scarring hair loss, ranging from mild to severe
* Scalp burning (without redness), accompanying lesions
* Pitting and ridging of the fingernails

Hairs that do grow back often lack color, or may be either temporarily or permanently white. This hypopigmentation is not seen in other forms of alopecia.

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

The earlier alopecia areata is treated, the more success you will have at re-growing your hair. Long standing alopecia areata is more recalcitrant to therapy. When you see a board-certified dermatologist, like Dr. Ekpo, you see a doctor who has the training, knowledge, and expertise necessary to diagnose and treat your hair loss.

Dr. Ekpo can work with you to find the treatments best suited to help you. She can also give you self-care tips that can help if you lose your eyelashes, eyebrows, the hair inside your ears, or hair on other areas of your body. Dr. Ekpo can discuss a personalized hair restoration plan with you to help achieve your realistic hair goals.