

1 Alopecia Areata

How can I support a student with alopecia areata?

- ✓ Ask the student and their family directly how you can help. Take this opportunity to listen to their individual needs.
- ✓ Provide the opportunity for them to discuss their condition with the class if they wish to do so. They may prefer the teacher provides information to the class. This can allow their peers to ask questions in a productive setting. They may show National Alopecia Areata Foundation video (link on next page).
- ✓ Immediately address any teasing and bullying. Provide education to any students saying harmful things and offer effective support for the affected student.
- ✓ Recognize their interests and acknowledge their successes in the classroom and in social settings.

OVERVIEW

Alopecia areata is a common condition of hair loss seen in children and adults. It is thought to be caused by an immune system attack on hair follicles. The immune system is meant to protect against germs and infections, but sometimes can attack the body's healthy cells in autoimmune disease.

Alopecia areata usually causes several round bald patches on the scalp. Some children can have more extensive hair loss, such as alopecia totalis (loss of all head hair) or alopecia universalis (loss of all head and body hair).

Some children can improve without treatment, but others require topical creams or injections into the affected site. Classmates may ask if the affected child has cancer due to the association with hair loss, but alopecia is in no way associated with cancer.



What symptoms does someone with alopecia areata experience?

The affected skin is not typically painful or itchy. Affected students may experience emotional distress due to the visible nature of their condition.

What special measures might students with alopecia areata need?

While hats are often not allowed in schools, students with alopecia may feel more comfortable wearing a hat. If you have a student who prefers wearing a hat, it is important to discuss making this exception with other teachers and administrators so the student does not encounter difficulty outside the classroom.

Students may also need help with sunscreen application to prevent sunburns.

Is it contagious?

No, alopecia areata is not contagious. Other students will not get alopecia with physical contact or play.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- > **Alopecia Areata School Guide: Tools for Students, Parents, and Teachers for Success in the Classroom**
National Alopecia Areata Foundation
<https://www.naaf.org/resource/alopecia-areata-school-guide>
- > **Educational Resources**
Children's Alopecia Project
<https://www.childrensalopeciaproject.org/about/educational-resources/>
- > **"Why My Hair Falls Out" Video**
National Alopecia Areata Foundation
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1RwDayaqNU>
- > **How To Explain Alopecia By Age**
A Children's House for the Soul
<https://achildrenshouse.org/how-to-explain-alopecia/>

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