

Frontal Fibrosing Alopecia

The condition Frontal Fibrosing Alopecia (FFA) is a relatively new medical condition affecting hair and scalp. I was around 1995 that patients were first diagnosed with this destructive alopecia. It was said initially that this form of alopecia would only affect women who were going through the menopause. As time has passed, it has been recognised that this condition also affects a small proportion in middle aged males.

Many patients who are suffering with FFA tell me that they had not been aware of the gradual onset until someone else had commented upon recession at the hairline. The feature that patients usually notice first themselves is the gradual loss of their eyebrows, although they often believe this is simply a lightening of the eyebrows with age, which many people experience who do not have FFA.



FFA is a slow creeping destruction of hair follicles along the frontal margin, extending back to the vertex and behind the ears, approximately 2 centimetres. It does not appear to spread as far as the crown region. Within the region of loss, the scalp may feel irritated before pustules appear. Once these pustules erupt, the scalp becomes red around the follicular openings and the pustules start to weep. Then scabs form over the eruption and the affected hair follicles are destroyed, causing hair fall. Once the scabs fall away, this leaves a permanent scarred area. The skin around the frontal margin, where this has occurred will be left pale in colour and shiny.

During these changes, patients will note a gradual destruction of their eye brows. There are no pustules in this case. The brow hairs simply stop growing and the follicular openings close, usually starting from the outer ends of the brow, moving inwards. The brows will not recover.

This condition at present has no known cure, but what we do understand is that the condition gradually burns itself out

Some patients do find that certain trichological shampoos and topical treatments may have a beneficial influence on some of the hair around the affected area by reducing the infection caused by the pustular eruptions. However, there is no guarantee.

If you suffer with any inflammation affecting the neck of the follicular openings, it is advisable to contact a registered Trichologist. Once the condition has been identified, the Trichologist will likely advise that you contact your GP, who can prescribe antibiotics to try to prevent further destruction of hair follicles or refer you on to a consultant dermatologist, who may wish to do a biopsy.

It is important to remain in contact with your Trichologist, who will be able to help you monitor the condition and suggest cosmetic options to improve the appearance.

Birmingham Trichology Centre

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Such options will include:

- Coloured Hair fibres
- Coloured Sprays
- Wax Camouflaged Pencils
- Camouflage Creams.
- Wigs and/or Hair Pieces.
- Artificial eye brows.
- Tattooed eye brows.

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