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Male/Female Pattern Hair Loss

Hair loss treatments are often combined for best results. Not all options are appropriate for every patient. Your provider will help determine which treatments are safe and appropriate for you.

Medications

Topical Minoxidil (OTC) – FDA-approved

Safe for men and women.

Side effects: temporary shedding when starting, scalp irritation or allergy, unwanted facial hair if medication spreads.

Oral Minoxidil – FDA-approved for blood pressure, **used off-label** for hair loss

Side effects: low blood pressure (may increase fall risk), leg or ankle swelling, unwanted hair growth; rarely heart rhythm abnormalities or heart inflammation.

Oral Finasteride – FDA-approved

Safe for men and post-menopausal women.

Side effects: decreased libido, erectile dysfunction, changes in sperm count; has been associated with depression or anxiety; may alter prostate blood tests (PSA—primary care should be notified).

Precautions: **Blood donation is not allowed** while taking this medication.

Pregnancy/Teratogenic Risk: Finasteride can cause birth defects in a male fetus. **Do not use during pregnancy.** Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant should not handle crushed or broken tablets.

Topical Finasteride – Off-label

Thought to have fewer systemic side effects than oral finasteride, but less well studied.

Side effects/precautions: scalp irritation or allergy; due to uncertain systemic absorption, **avoid use in premenopausal women; blood donation is not recommended** while using this medication.

Pregnancy/Teratogenic Risk: Should not be used during pregnancy.

Spirolactone – FDA-approved for blood pressure, **used off-label** for hair loss

Primarily used in women. **Not safe for women with a history of breast cancer.**

Side effects: breast tenderness, menstrual irregularities, lightheadedness or dizziness; can raise potassium levels, which may affect heart rhythm.

Rare but serious side effects: severe skin reactions, liver or kidney effects, or bone marrow effects.

Medication Note: *Not all side effects listed. Not everyone experiences side effects, and most patients tolerate these treatments well.*

Supplements

Nutrafol

Dietary supplement for hair loss. Supplements are **not subject to FDA approval standards**.

Not safe in patients with liver disease. Available for purchase in our office.

Procedures

Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Injections – Off-label

Your blood is processed to isolate the platelet-rich portion, which contains **growth factors that stimulate hair growth**, and is injected into the scalp.

Side effects: pain, bleeding, bruising, infection (rare).

Hair Transplant

Hair is moved from the back of the scalp to thinning areas. Best for gradual hair loss beginning after age 30. Ongoing medication is usually required for maintenance.

Devices

Low-Level Light Therapy (LLLT) – FDA-cleared

Home-use devices available as caps or combs. Caps work best for thinner hair; combs for thicker hair. Shown in studies to be approximately as effective as topical minoxidil.

Practice Disclaimer

This handout is for **educational purposes only** and does not replace medical advice. Treatments described may be used off-label. Risks, benefits, and alternatives should be discussed with your healthcare provider. Individual results may vary, and no specific outcome is guaranteed.