

# Causes of hair loss (alopecia) in children

March 25 2024, by Keri Wallace, MD, FAAP, American Academy of Pediatrics

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Hair loss (alopecia) may not be as common in kids as adults, but there are variety of a reasons it may happen. While it can be upsetting for both parents and children, the condition usually improves once the cause is identified and addressed.

There are different causes of [hair loss](#) in [infants](#), children and teens. The most common reasons depend on the child's age. In most cases, hair that is lost grows back on its own. There are treatments available when the hair is not growing back.

Hair loss is very common in newborns and young babies. Almost all babies will have some—and possibly all—of their hair fall out during the first few months of life. This is normal and to be expected—the hair will grow back.

Some babies will lose more hair on the back of their heads than other parts of the scalp. Don't worry—this is not unusual, and the hair grows back normally over a few months.

Hair loss in [older children](#) can have a variety of causes. Some of the more common reasons a child or teen may lose hair include:

Alopecia areata is an autoimmune disease that can affect people of any age, including children. It happens when the [immune system](#), which is supposed to protect us and fight germs, instead attacks the hair follicles and causes hair to fall out.

Alopecia areata shows up as round or oval bald spots on the scalp with completely missing hair leaving smooth patches of skin. Most of the time, alopecia areata is limited to a few patches, and the hair will regrow and fill in the patches.

Treatments for alopecia areata can help when the hair doesn't regrow in a few months or a lot of the hair on the scalp is missing. The first step in treatment is with creams or ointments or lotions, such as steroid medicines, applied to the bald spots to decrease the immune system activity in those areas.

If the hair loss is widespread, it can be more difficult to treat. Luckily, new treatments are being studied all the time and some show good promise for more difficult [alopecia areata](#).

## When to see your pediatrician

Most [newborns](#) and very young infants will lose hair after birth, so there's usually no need to see a doctor beyond regular checkups for this. However, discuss any ongoing hair loss that's affecting your child or teen with your pediatrician.

The doctor will look at your child's scalp and do a [physical exam](#) to help determine the cause of the hair loss. Sometimes bloodwork may be ordered and sent to a lab. For some children, a referral to a pediatric dermatologist may be needed.

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