

Alopecia areata

- Although Alopecia areata is known as “udugowwan kama”, it is not a skin condition caused by animals.
- It can affect both males and females of any age category.
- It is known to be caused by an immune dysfunction of the body. It can be precipitated by stress as well.
- This is not infectious and is not due to a vitamin or nutrient deficiency.

1. What are the clinical features?

- There can be circular patches of hair loss.
- The scalp is not itchy or painful (tender)
- It can range from a single patch to multiple patches and can vary from person to person.
- Rarely it can affect the whole scalp and body.
- New hair will initially appear as white and later convert to normal color
- Some can present with pits in nails.

2. How to diagnose?

- This condition can be clinically diagnosed by a dermatologist. In special circumstances skin biopsies are used to identify the condition.
- Alopecia areata can be associated with other autoimmune diseases e.g.: Type 1 Diabetes, thyroid diseases. To identify these associations blood investigations will be needed at times.

3. Treatment

- Occasionally hair can regrow even without any treatment.
(However, there is a chance of recurrence)
- If not spontaneously resolving, following treatment options are considered:
 1. Topical steroids (cream, lotion)
 2. Intralesional steroid
 3. Steroid pills (as mini pulses)
 4. Methotrexate
 5. Phototherapy (UVA/UVB)
 6. PRP (Platelet rich plasma)
 7. Other: wigs, camouflage

Alopecia areata is not a harmful condition. However, it causes a significant psychological and social impact on patients. Therefore, it is advised to meet a doctor at an early stage of the disease.

