



KATIE BRINDLE

Alopecia Areata Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



What is Alopecia Areata?

According to the British Association of Dermatologists, Alopecia areata is a common cause of non-scarring hair loss that can occur at any age. It usually causes small, coin-sized, round patches of baldness on the scalp, although hair elsewhere such as the beard, eyebrows, eyelashes, body and limbs can be affected. In some people larger areas are affected and occasionally it can involve the whole scalp (alopecia totalis) or even the entire body and scalp (alopecia universalis).

It's impossible to predict how much hair will be lost, but it can grow back over a period of months or years, though there is no guarantee. The chances of hair regrowth are better if less hair is lost at the beginning. People with only a few small patches can grow the hair back within a year. If more than half the hair is lost, there is less chance of full regrowth. The hair sometimes regrows white, at least at first. Some get alopecia areata more than once. In alopecia totalis and alopecia universalis, the likelihood of total regrowth is less.

Western medicine considers that alopecia areata is caused by inflammation, the cause of which is unknown. It could be considered as a type of autoimmune disease, where the body attacks the growing hair. People with alopecia areata are a bit more likely to develop other autoimmune conditions, such as thyroiditis, diabetes, lupus and vitiligo. Alopecia areata is not contagious and no connection has been made with vitamin deficiencies. Stress may be a trigger, although many affected do not seem to have a high level of stress. There seems to be a slight genetic link since about 20% of people with alopecia areata have a history of it in the family.

Some treatments are available involving steroid creams, injections and tablets, ultraviolet light treatment, and various other creams and immunosuppressive treatments.

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The Yang Sheng perspective

‘Yang Sheng’ means ‘nurture life’. It is the ‘self-care’ part of Chinese medicine: the part you can do for yourself, as a complement to any other treatment you may be undertaking.

In addition to physical (visible) symptoms, in Chinese medicine we also consider what is happening with the body at an energetic (invisible) level. ‘Qi’ (pronounced ‘chee’) is the energy that runs through all of us. Even when you sit completely still, there will be some movement happening inside you: your heart is beating, your fluids moving – every cell is constantly in motion. All of these different types of energy, combined with your breath, is what makes up your ‘qi’.

Qi isn’t the same as circulation, but they are linked. When you stimulate your blood flow or move your lymphatic fluid, your qi is also stimulated. Everything flows together. The channels in which qi flows are called meridians.

According to Chinese medicine, the quality and movement of qi through the body determines your health. The ideal state is one of smooth flow with no imbalances or blockages, which are called ‘stagnation’ or stagnant qi. If you have stagnation, whether physical, emotional or spiritual, this will eventually manifest as disease.

In Chinese medicine, hair is metaphorically thought of like trees in nature. Trees need water to keep them moist, earth to support their foundation, and sunlight to provide warmth. In the body, the organ associated with water is the kidneys, that associated with earth is the spleen, and blood is associated with warmth and fire. It is essential in Chinese medicine to boost these three bodily energies in order to address alopecia areata.

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Steps you can take to help

General advice

Chinese breathing and bodywork techniques have both been scientifically proven to be effective in reducing stress and supporting the body.

They:

- Engage your parasympathetic nervous system
- Regulate blood flow
- Reduce heat in the body
- Calm the nervous system
- Strengthen the organs

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Breath & Alopecia Areata

The single most effective way to reduce your stress levels is to take conscious, deep, abdominal breaths. By moving your awareness out of your head and into your breath, your heart rate slows, your mind is calmed, and your blood oxygenated.

[View the Breath Guide](#)

Qigong & Alopecia Areata

Qigong is a fundamental pillar of Chinese medicine. It is classed as a form of internal exercise. Internal exercise is any combination of slow, considered movements with breath and mental engagement, it's often referred to as 'Chinese yoga'. Qigong is, quite simply, the ultimate selfhealing technique. Whatever your issue, qigong will help to rebalance the body. By learning to manipulate qi around the body, you rejuvenate and energise, lower the heart rate and blood pressure and support the immune system.

[View the Qigong Guide](#)

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Tapping & Alopecia Areata

Tapping with bamboo is an ancient Chinese therapy that works wonders for your general wellbeing. It's a simple, pleasurable, yet hugely effective way to support and maintain your health, no matter what your age or physical state. Tapping the skin on a daily basis enables the free flow of this all-important circulation. In as little as one-minute a day, an all over body tap can clear areas of stagnation, support lymphatic drainage and encourage a smooth flow of blood and qi around the body. Think of it as a natural battery charger for the body.

[View the Tapping Guide](#)

Gua sha & Alopecia Areata

Gua sha is a therapeutic healing technique that has been widely practised in China for thousands of years. It involves using a round-edged tool, traditionally made from materials such as jade or metal, to press stroke the skin until redness appears. You can even use a jam jar lid! Gua sha has been used to treat a whole range of conditions from fever to chronic cough and migraines. It has been shown in studies to increase micro-circulation by 400%, and clear inflammation. Note that gua sha should NOT be used directly on broken skin. However, it can be effective to lessen the marks left by an acne outbreak. There are lots of how-to gua sha videos on my Instagram feed; and you can also download the Gua Sha Guide.

[Download the Gua sha Guide](#)

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Specific advice

Any symptoms of ill health will always relate to one of the five key organs we consider when we are treating in Chinese medicine. These are Heart, Lung, Liver, Stomach/Spleen and Kidney.

Depending on what your symptoms are, it will usually indicate an imbalance in a specific organ. For example, palpitations are concerned with the heart.

An energetic imbalance does not mean you have a dramatic health issue. This aspect of Chinese medicine is about prevention, not cure. That means reading the subtle signs and symptoms of the body daily. Imbalance starts at an energetic level and you rectify it at an energetic level.

The more serious the symptoms, the deeper the imbalance. If the symptom is mild – e.g. low-level anxiety before a meeting or mild rosacea after a glass of red wine, the imbalance will be easier to rectify.

It is important to know that when I refer to organ imbalance, I mean energetic and not physical. So, for example, heart imbalance does not mean heart disease. It is a subtle signal that your body is not in balance and the strain of that is impacting your heart energy, which may eventually lead to an issue over time. In the first instance, it could be felt as low level anxiety, occasional palpitations or a lack of desire to socialise. We look for the low level signs to stop things getting a foothold in the body and causing a greater problem further down the line.

Use low levels symptoms as a barometer of your wellness. Address them to keep the body healthy and they are much less likely to become a deeper issue. This is the principle behind yang sheng and self-care. There are many techniques rooted in Chinese medicine that can help with alopecia areata, including paying attention to your daily routine and food intake, combing and massaging the scalp and waist, meridian massages (this works especially well for children) and more.

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Suggested daily routine

- Sleep before 10 pm (to replenish the Blood and Kidney Qi and enhance your natural repair system)
- Have a cup of warm water first thing in the morning
- Have warm food and drinks during the day. Limit cold food and beverages (to take care of the Spleen and the Blood circulation)
- Have some grains at every meal. Try to incorporate a variety of whole grains (grains are essential for the immunity system in Chinese Medicine)

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Scalp combing

This can replenish the qi and blood and improve circulation. It enhances hair growth and strengthens your constitution. It also helps to reduce stress.

A Rose quartz gua sha tool would be the best to replenish the blood. You can follow this video every morning.

You can also massage in a circular motion with fingers:

Put all ten digits on your hairline. Gently massage the scalp in small, circular motions.

Move backwards across the scalp until you reach the nape of the neck. Practice this at night before bed.

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Meridian massage

To enhance the spleen, liver, lung and kidney. You can use your fingers or a Rose or Jade restorer.

Massage inwards to enhance, outwards to clear energy. The Spleen normally needs to be enhanced. However, if there is constipation, it needs to be cleared. The Kidney normally needs to be enhanced. The Liver needs to be cleared, as in clearing the stress out.

Practice this on the left hand, once a day.

The meridian massage Kidney needs to be done very gently and fast. About 100-200 times per minute.

[View the Kidney Guide](#)

[View the Stomach & Spleen Guide](#)

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Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey. The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and www.hayoumethod.com

Buy Yang Sheng Book

Live Qigong Healing classes (3 x each week) for a more in-depth, healing practice – full details on www.hayoufit.com

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health.

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram. Purchase the accompanying tools from www.hayoumethod.com

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit www.hayoumethod.com to view our comprehensive FAQs.

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