

A Comprehensive Guide to Trichosis Disorders: Different Faces of Trichosis and Their Treatments

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DESCRIPTION

Trichosis refers to abnormal hair growth conditions that can affect different parts of the body. While hair is typically associated with the scalp, it can also appear in unusual areas, or grow excessively, causing both medical and aesthetic concerns. The term "trichosis" is derived from the Greek word "trichos," meaning hair and includes various hair-related disorders, such as excessive growth or abnormal hair texture.

Types of trichosis

Hypertrichosis: Hypertrichosis is the most well-known form of trichosis and is characterized by excessive hair growth on the body. It can be congenital (present at birth) or acquired (developing later in life). In congenital hypertrichosis, the individual is born with abnormal hair growth, while acquired hypertrichosis may be caused by medication, hormonal imbalances, or certain diseases like anorexia nervosa. The severity of hypertrichosis can vary; some individuals experience mild growth, while others develop hair growth covering large areas of the body, leading to both physical and emotional challenges.

Hirsutism: Hirsutism is another form of trichosis, but it specifically affects women. It involves the development of course, dark hair in areas where women typically don't grow hair, such as the face, chest, or back. This condition is commonly caused by hormonal imbalances, particularly an excess of androgens (male hormones). Conditions such as Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) or thyroid disorders often contribute to hirsutism. While not harmful in itself, hirsutism can cause emotional distress and self-esteem issues.

Lanugo: Lanugo refers to the fine, soft hair that covers the body of a fetus during pregnancy. Though it usually sheds before birth, it can reappear in some adults, particularly in cases of severe malnutrition or eating disorders like anorexia nervosa. The regrowth of lanugo can be distressing for those affected, as it may signal underlying health issues.

Causes of trichosis

Trichosis has a variety of causes, which can be broadly grouped into genetic, hormonal, medical and environmental factors. Genetic Factors play a significant role in some forms of trichosis, particularly congenital hypertrichosis. This condition is inherited and results in abnormal hair growth from birth. Individuals with a family history of hypertrichosis are more likely to experience this condition. Hormonal Imbalances are often at the heart of disorders like hirsutism and some cases of hypertrichosis. When the body produces excess male hormones, such as androgens, women can develop male-pattern hair growth.

Medications can also contribute to abnormal hair growth. Some drugs, such as anabolic steroids, corticosteroids, or certain chemotherapy medications, can stimulate hair growth. The effects of these medications vary depending on the type and duration of treatment. Environmental Factors like malnutrition, stress, or severe illness can lead to changes in hair growth patterns. For example, the regrowth of lanugo in individuals with anorexia nervosa is a response to severe nutritional deficiencies. Similarly, chronic stress can contribute to conditions like trichotillomania, where hair-pulling becomes a coping mechanism.

Treatment options

Treating trichosis depends largely on the underlying cause and the specific type of condition.

Medications: Medications are commonly used to manage hormone-related causes of trichosis, especially in conditions like hirsutism. Oral contraceptives, anti-androgens (such as spironolactone) and corticosteroids can help regulate hormone levels and reduce excessive hair growth. In some cases, medications targeting the underlying health issue (e.g., PCOS treatment) may also help manage symptoms.

Hair removal techniques: These techniques are popular for managing excessive hair growth caused by conditions like

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hypertrichosis and hirsutism. Laser hair removal, electrolysis and waxing are common methods used to reduce or eliminate unwanted hair. These treatments provide long-term or permanent solutions, though they do not address the underlying cause of the hair growth.

Psychological support: Psychological Support is important in cases of trichotillomania, where hair-pulling becomes a compulsive behavior. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and habit-reversal training have been found to be effective in helping individuals manage the urge to pull their hair. Addressing the emotional triggers of trichotillomania can lead to significant improvements in both the behavior and the person's emotional well-being.

CONCLUSION

Trichosis includes a wide range of hair growth disorders, each with its own set of causes, symptoms and treatments. While some types, like excessive body hair or abnormal facial hair, can be addressed through hair removal techniques or medications, others, like trichotillomania, require psychological interventions. Regardless of the form, trichosis can have significant emotional and psychological effects. Understanding these conditions, along with the available treatments, can help those affected manage their symptoms and improve their quality of life.