How Ectodermal Dysplasias Can Affect Hair

Scalp Hair

In the ectodermal dysplasias, the scalp hair may be...

- absent
- sparse
- fine
- lightly pigmented
- abnormal in texture
- fragile
- unruly, sticking out in all directions
- difficult to comb
- dry because the oil glands are absent or poorly developed.

Some defects of the hair are obvious at birth, while others may not be noted until later in life. Hair growth in some types of ectodermal dysplasia is slow and haircuts are not needed as often as in unaffected family members.

After puberty, hair growth improves for some individuals. There may be some increase in hair density and thickness during adolescence, as well as darkening of the hair, but a full head of thick hair usually fails to develop. Early male pattern baldness is common in some ectodermal dysplasias.

In some types of ectodermal dysplasia, such as anyklyoblepharon-ectodermal dysplasia-cleft lip and/or palate (AEC) syndrome and ectrodactyly-ectodermal dysplasia-clefting (EEC) syndrome, the hair may be patchy in distribution and coarse and unruly, rather than thin and fine. In other forms of ectodermal dysplasia, such as hypohidrotic ectodermal dysplasia (HED), there may be alopecia, or baldness.

Body Hair

- The eyebrows, eyelashes, and other body hair may also be absent or sparse.
- Body hair may thicken and darken at puberty.
- Facial hair and hair of the groin and underarms develops normally in adolescents with ectodermal dysplasia.