

# Healthy Body

Foreword by Carol Cooke AM



Health Conscious Series

**Healthy Body**

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*'I believe that the greatest gift you can give your  
family and the world is a healthy you.'*

– Joyce Meyer



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# Foreword

Carol Cooke AM

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*'My body is my temple.'*





Unfortunately, we are living in a world where people are abusing their temples on a daily basis.

As an elite athlete for most of my life I have tried to take care of my body. This doesn't mean that I have always done the right thing. I've gone through times where I really have let myself down. But after being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1998 and wanting to defy the predictions of a very uncaring neurologist, I realised that I needed to really look after my body.

We never understand how much taking care of our bodies can mean until we lose the ability to use it.

In 2001 I was in a wheelchair full time and it was then that I decided to take charge and change the way I was living. It was important for me to look at what I put into my body and make sure that I was doing enough exercise to keep it working the best it could. I did have a bit of medical intervention but I also got back into the water to exercise where I could do things that I couldn't do on land. There was the real possibility that MS would steal my ability to do the things that I loved to do and I didn't want to give those things up. I have been able to defy the predictions of that doctor and go on to win 3 gold medals over 2 Paralympic games and become a five-time

world champion in the sport of cycling by taking care of my body and mind.

For without taking care of my body, the mind will not follow.

Our bodies are amazing vessels that, if treated right, will give life, love and happiness for years. Our bodies really do take a pounding throughout our years of living, sometimes not of our own doing. With pollution on the rise and the use of additives to our foods, at times we can be forgiven for not knowing what to do.

This book has some fabulous ideas and suggestions for helping you learn to treat your body as the temple it was meant to be. This isn't a new way of living – we have been thinking about our bodies and health for a long time.

Thales of Miletus – a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher in 546BC – said:

*'What man is happy? He who has a healthy body,  
a resourceful mind, and a docile nature.'*

None of us have all the answers, but this book will help you take those first steps to a healthier, better you.

# Happy Health, Happy Hair

Megan Wright

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*'It is said that the eyes are the mirror to ones soul, I believe that the hair is the mirror to ones health.'*

**– Megan Wright IAT**



**M**y name is Megan Wright and I am a hair and scalp specialist, otherwise known as a trichologist. I have been practising for seven years with a previous history of hairdressing, as well as being involved within the hair and beauty industry – as an educator in both the private and public system – for the past 30 years. You might think that hair health has very little to do with body health, but from my experience it is a good indicator that there is more going on inside the body.

### **Trichology ... What is It?**

Trichology is the scientific study of the hair and scalp. Trichology is a very specialised occupation and we are very privileged to assist patients with a vast number of differing hair and scalp concerns. Some of these concerns include, but are not limited to: various alopecias (hair loss) including genetic, hormonal, stress related, diffuse, unexplained sudden hair loss and patchy hair loss, to name a few. We also work with patients who have psoriasis; atopic dermatitis; ringworm and other fungal diseases and abnormalities of the scalp.

As a trichologist, I assess the patient's complaint with thorough consultation, incorporating the use of a magnifying apparatus called a Hair and

Scalp Polariser. This allows the user and patient to view the hair and scalp as a magnified image (60x, 100x, 150x).

Once an assessment has been made, we then create a treatment plan and/or course of action for the patient. I work with my patients holistically because I believe every facet of your life has a direct and indirect imprint on the health of your hair.

We recommend vitamin/mineral supplements; tinctures and topical creams, amino acids, and whenever appropriate, I work with my patients to implement the appropriate lifestyle changes required to maintain their hair and scalp health.

Throughout this chapter we will discuss the autoimmune deficiency and how lifestyle can have a direct effect on the health of your hair and scalp. We will discuss two particular hair and scalp disorders, their symptoms, how we can manage and treat them, and also prevention.

## **Autoimmune Diseases of the Hair and Scalp**

I chose to share these two diseases with you because they both have similarities. We will discuss their symptoms, aetiologies and triggers, along with some treatments.

### **Psoriasis and Alopecia Areata**

Psoriasis and alopecia areata are the two most common disorders that present in my clinic.

Both alopecia areata and psoriasis are autoimmune diseases, which are 'triggered' (for want of a better word) by some form of trauma, physical or emotional. The trigger may be different from person to person. Those who are not able to manage their stress levels etc. may be more likely to develop these symptoms.

Why are some people affected with psoriasis and alopecia areata and not others? What is the chance of you getting one of these disorders? If psoriasis and or alopecia areata are a hereditary disorder, then why can generations go without it becoming evident?

Facts:

- Both of these diseases can also be found on any area of a patient's body.
- Both alopecia areata and psoriasis are triggered by a trauma of some kind. A trauma could be: an immunisation, physical or emotional trauma, sudden weight loss, or any number of stressors.
- Both alopecia areata and Psoriasis are genetic disorders. This means that you and I may have the same amount of stress/trauma in our lives, but if I don't have the genetic predisposition for alopecia areata or psoriasis, it will not present that way.
- Neither psoriasis nor alopecia areata are contagious disorders.



## **Psoriasis**

Psoriasis is a hereditary or genetic disorder. However, this does not mean that everyone will present with it. How a person manages their stress levels can have a great bearing on whether or not psoriasis becomes a part of their lives. It is not limited to the head. Psoriasis may present on any part of the body. The most common sites apart from the scalp are elbows, knees, arms and legs as well as fingernails.

Psoriasis appears to be flaky patches, which look silvery with an irritated redness underneath. Sometimes the area will be itchy and upon itching, the area may bleed easily.

Everybody manages their stressors differently. Unfortunately for some, the pre-disposition of psoriasis may be 'triggered'. A stress is anything unusual experienced by the body and can be experienced in times of fear, anxiety, excitement, physical and/or emotional trauma, even the death of a family member.

One of the body's ways of ridding the skin of the irritant is to provoke excessive scaling. This means that the skin cells in a particular area of the body replace themselves more rapidly. The cells are moving up to the epidermal layer much faster than usual. This is how the irritation and flakiness evolves with psoriasis. Normally, the skin replaces itself every 28 days or so, however, with psoriasis, the affected area is replacing itself much faster.

### **One Story:**

I have a patient who visits me every six months to maintain her psoriasis management program. She began coming to me about one year after her husband had passed away and was complaining of an itchy, flaky scalp. Like most people, she had been to the doctor and tried all of the anti-dandruff products available on the chemist shelves, but nothing had worked.

After a thorough consultation and visual examination, we determined that her condition was in fact psoriasis and I then proceeded to develop a treatment plan, which was relevant and sustainable to her needs. She changed her home hair care products to vegan friendly, we incorporated amino acids and a vitamin-mineral supplement to her daily dietary input and she began a meditation program for that calming influence.

When she returned for her six-month check-in, there was a significant improvement in her overall scalp health. She still had a couple of little patches, which bothered her, but she was able to wear black clothing without looking like a 'ski slope'.

### **Treatments**

Once your body has presented with psoriasis, there is no cure, however with a careful treatment plan and an ongoing maintenance program, relief may be found.

Some of the programs I recommend to my patients include the use of vegan friendly hair,

scalp and cleansing products. This prevents animal by-products sitting on the skin and creating more 'food' for our healthy bacteria, and this limits the irritation.

Our scalp has millions of healthy bacteria living on its surface. When we have a condition such as psoriasis, our skin cells are reproducing at such a rate in some areas that we are unable to keep the excess skin cells from building up. Add into this mix, the thousands of hair strands, and it is very difficult to maintain a highly cleansed scalp. This is why there is irritation, redness and flakiness.

A vegan friendly conditioner has no animal fat (or animal by-products), therefore, we are not creating another food source for these healthy bacteria. This practice has made a notable difference in the treatment of my patients' symptoms.

Tar based creams and a thorough review of your dietary intake is also something to consider when treating psoriasis. I also take into consideration how you manage your stress levels. Do you have a regular 'time-out' session or even 10 minutes each day to find some peace and quiet, read a good book or sit and be still?

Corticosteroids and ultra-violet therapy are also recommended by medical practitioners and dermatologists.

Psoriasis is a condition that generally flares up every now and again and does not go away indefinitely once triggered. The way a person manages their stress levels, combined with the inclusion of a healthy diet with minimal processed foods, is most beneficial.

Quite often I get an influx of new Pphs can be due to the climate changes, wearing hats, and sudden variables in temperatures etc.

If applicable and possible, swimming in salt water is a great relief for people with these symptoms.

Please note that the information presented here is a guide only. Please seek medical advice if you are suffering from any of these symptoms.

### **Alopecia Areata**

The term Alopecia means 'hair loss'. Areata refers to the type, specific name or affected area of hair loss the patient presents. Like psoriasis, alopecia Areata is a genetic disorder. Again, this disorder does not necessarily present in every member of the family; it may even miss generations altogether.

As mentioned before, both of these disorders are 'triggered' by some sort of trauma or stress. Some triggers may include immunisations, emotional or physical trauma, viral or bacterial infection.

Alopecia areata presents as small round shiny hairless patches on the scalp. They may appear as small as a five cent piece and very often become larger if the trigger remains undetermined.

Alopecia areata is generally a self-correcting disorder, which means that once the 'trauma' or 'trigger' has been dealt with, the hair more often than not returns. Usually the first growth of hair is very fine white hair, but generally, the hair will thicken up and return to its original colour.

I always notify my patients that the problem may get worse before it gets better depending on how long ago the first patch was discovered.

### **A Story I'd Like to Share**

One patient came to me with a couple of small patches of hair loss. I assessed her hair and scalp and decided her problem was, in fact, alopecia areata.

She was walking around the corner down the street when she 'bumped' into a man who had a pet snake wrapped around his neck! Bizarre, but true.

She told me that her entire body went cold and her heart felt as though it had stopped for a moment. A few months later she noticed the bald patches on her scalp and came to see me for advice. She said she had also seen a professor of dermatology and he had told her to get a wig and offered no other advice.

I assessed her scalp microscopically and found viable hair follicles, which indicated to me that there was still hope. If there is a follicle (hole for the hair to grow out) there was still a chance. We began her treatment regimen, which included amino acids, mineral supplements and a cleaner diet and the incorporation of some form of meditation or quiet relaxation (for healing time). I made sure she understood that her hair loss might get worse before it got better.

Upon her next visit, three months later, she wore a beanie. Oh dear, I thought ... yep, all of her hair had fallen out. So we reassessed the health of her scalp again and yes, I could still see healthy

hair follicles all over her head. We continued with the treatment plan as expected.

Three months later she came back to me still wearing her beanie. I felt sad for her until ... tadaaa ... she whipped off the beanie and there was a healthy cover of hair! YAY! She has never looked back.

That is one of the happy ending stories. We found what the 'trigger' for her shock/trauma was and her body simply needed to recover and heal itself over time. There was every chance that her body could have recovered without the amino acids and mineral supplements, but I believe every little thing you can do to aid the recovery the better. This was an especially pleasurable success because she had been told by a professor of dermatology to 'never expect a healthy head of hair again and to invest in a wig.'

Not everyone has a story with a happy ending. I have another patient who has lost her hair and now wears a wig. She has lost eyebrows, lashes and all of her body hair. Mindset has a lot to do with it as does dealing with the 'trigger'. This particular patient's trigger was an emotional situation, which she found was very difficult to change. Once alopecia areata encompasses the whole body it is most likely going to become permanent and is therefore renamed alopecia universalis. This is most certainly not a regular occurrence.

That said, a very high percentage of my alopecia areata patients have had 100% hair growth return.

Now they must simply be aware that this is how their body deals with trauma and stress and keep

a close eye on their stress management through healthy eating, meditation or deep relaxation and finding 10 minutes in each day to be still.

## **Treatments**

Alopecia areata is generally a self-correcting disorder. What I mean by this is that usually over time, the hair loss recovers without much change. As we have spoken about also, is the 'What if it gets worse?' scenario. If the 'trigger' is not found, and the body is constantly being stressed, the symptoms – e.g. hair loss – will more than likely continue.

Depending on the condition, the inclusion of amino acids, multi-vitamins, minerals and a cleaner diet is all that a patient requires. Sometimes a psychologist may be suggested if the trauma is emotional. I always recommend some form of meditation or quiet relaxation. A lot of people find drawing or colouring beneficial.

There will be little to no change if the 'stress' is not changed.

As I stated with psoriasis, this information is a guide and from my experience. You must seek medical advice if you are suffering any of these symptoms.

## **Here are My Three Most Frequently Asked Questions ...**

*1. Will my hair ever grow back in those patches?*

Alopecia areata is in most cases a 'self-correcting' disorder. What I mean by this is that once the body has suffered the initial shock or trauma, it generally begins to restore and repair the

damaged area. If, however, the issue has not been resolved, or the body is not given enough opportunity to restore and repair, the disorder will most likely continue. Quite often when I see a patient, depending on their history, I make sure they are aware that the hair loss may often get worse before it gets better.

Once the trigger for your alopecia areata has been discovered and a treatment plan has been formulated, the recovery is generally very positive. I have only one patient who has suffered alopecia universalis (complete and permanent hair loss) and I believe the contributing factor to this outcome was the fact that they did not change the main stressor. Therefore, the body was never given the opportunity to begin the recovery process and the ongoing release of noradrenaline had a very detrimental effect in that patient's life.

## *2. Will alopecia areata or psoriasis come back?*

The short answer to that question is yes.

When an autoimmune disorder such as AA or Psoriasis becomes physically active, it means that your body has been stressed or trying to get your attention for quite a while. These disorders, once they have become productive, will always have the potential to return whenever your immune system is run down and working hard.

However, the changes and improvements you make in your lifestyle and your ability to manage your external and internal stress levels, will definitely have an effect on the reoccurrence of either of these disorders.



*3. Will psoriasis ever go away for good?*

Like AA, once your body has suffered a 'trigger' you will always have the potential of a reoccurrence. Psoriasis is not curable. However, with the incorporation of proper diet, suitable home health care products such as vegan-friendly shampoos and conditioners, specific vitamin and mineral supplements as well as some form of relaxation for the healing process, psoriasis is very often treatable and with the right treatment program, often becomes a manageable condition.

*Three actions the reader should take as a result of reading this chapter:*

1. Be mindful of your stress levels if you know you have a genetic pre-disposition to either alopecia areata or psoriasis.
2. Go back to the basics in all aspects of your lifestyle. This includes cutting down on processed foods (eat raw, fresh, unprocessed produce); use vegan-friendly healthcare products, such as shampoo, conditioner and body cleansing products; drink 6–8 glasses of water each day.
3. Find at least one activity where you can absolutely stop and feel calm. I suggest meditation or meditative walking, even sitting in a your favourite cosy spot with a good book. You must allow yourself at least 10 minutes per day to stop and breathe.

These actions can be useful for general health regardless of whether you have these genetic predispositions. Hair, like nails and skin, will reflect how healthy you are on the inside. So if they are looking a bit dry, flaky, and patchy or off-colour, have a think about how well you are looking after yourself.

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How do you keep a healthy mind?

In the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives, it's a question that's often neglected. We may

diet or exercise to take care of our bodies, but little thought is given to good mental health. Mental health issues – things like depression, anxiety, etc. – are on the rise. A general malaise of constant tiredness, agitation, or even anger, is common.

How do you feel? As you read this blurb, pause a moment and reflect on your mental health. Is your outlook positive, constructive, and purposeful? Or do you find yourself often flustered, uptight, and confused? Unfortunately, we can run with these patterns so long they become our mindset. But surely you want something better. Surely you deserve something better?

*Healthy Mind* features articles from ten diverse professionals who explore the concept of a healthy mind from their specific viewpoint, and offer tips and exercises on creating and maintaining good mental health.

Simple, interesting, and compelling, *Healthy Mind* has something for everybody, and is sure to become an invaluable guide.

