

# FINDING A MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

There are several ways you can find a therapist or counselor.

- Ask your doctor's office for recommendations
- Ask people in your support group
- Contact your local mental health association
- Reach out to your insurance company

## THE NAAF PATIENT CONFERENCE

NAAF Conferences aren't just for professionals. Every year, NAAF hosts the NAAF Patient Conference. It moves from city to city annually to reach as many people as possible. People from all over the world gather in a safe and encouraging environment. They can learn more about alopecia areata from top medical and research professionals, and others with the disease.

The conference is an excellent resource for people of all ages who have alopecia areata or love someone who does. The time spent at the conference allows them to make personal and emotional connections, some of which may turn into long-term friendships.

*For more information on Support resources from NAAF, visit: [www.naaf.org/find-support](http://www.naaf.org/find-support)*




## CONNECT WITH NAAF

NAAF is the voice of the AA community. It serves the nearly 7 million Americans who live with the autoimmune disease, which causes unpredictable, often sudden, and severe hair loss. Many people think of AA as a cosmetic condition, but hair loss can be deeply traumatic. It can cause emotional and economic pain and social isolation. It is not just hair.

As NAAF pushes for AA research, support, and awareness, it also provides the community with more choices to embrace or live free of alopecia areata. We connect the patient, medical, and scientific communities to drive research and treatment development, raising awareness to reduce stigma, and providing support to improve lives.

**Founded more than 40 years ago by volunteers, NAAF serves as the voice of the alopecia areata community. Join us today and help amplify our voice!**

### CONNECT WITH US:

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 [www.naaf.org](http://www.naaf.org)



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[www.naaf.org](http://www.naaf.org)



## COPING WITH ALOPECIA AREATA



[www.naaf.org](http://www.naaf.org)

COPING

# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

It can be hard living with a disease like alopecia areata, especially if you feel alone. But you're not alone. Millions of people live with the disease. You may have met someone who has the disease and not even know it. Some people lose only small patches of hair, while others lose a significant amount or all of it. Many of the feelings you experience about having alopecia areata are shared by most others with the disease and those who love them.

But when you meet someone with the same disease, you will learn that you aren't alone after all. The National Alopecia Areata Foundation (NAAF) website ([www.naaf.org](http://www.naaf.org)) is a good resource for you and your family and friends. The information on the site introduces you to others who have the same diagnosis. Suddenly, there's a whole new group of people who do understand how you feel.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF

You probably weren't prepared when your doctor told you that you have alopecia areata. After all, unless you already knew someone with the disease, you likely never heard of it. Getting the news can start a cycle of negative or confusing thoughts and feelings. You might feel that you don't know where or how to start learning about alopecia areata.

### HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS:

- Gather information about alopecia areata from [www.naaf.org](http://www.naaf.org).
- Learn about treatments, how they work, costs, and side effects. You can get information from NAAF, your dermatologist, and your pharmacist.
- Connect with others who also have alopecia areata.
- Learn about the cosmetic things you can try. These include things like wigs and makeup.
- Learn how to manage symptoms of stress, depression, anger, or whatever confusing or negative emotion you feel.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORT

Support is available in many ways, including one-on-one or support groups. It is important to have people in your life who understand what it's like to have alopecia areata.

NAAF has support groups throughout the world and many meet virtually. Attending one may help you see how they can help you. Support groups allow you to share your thoughts and feelings with people who can validate them. These types of groups work for many people because they normalize the condition. The participants offer acceptance and understanding because they know what it's like to live with hair loss caused by alopecia areata. The others in the group can be good sources of advice, such as where to shop for wigs, how to find a good doctor, and more. They may also offer more hands-on things, teaching you how to put on a wig, wear a scarf, or even offer to take you to the doctor.

However, not everyone likes being in a group. If you are uncomfortable with groups, one-on-one support can also be helpful. You can meet people at your doctor's office or through a support group first, chatting on your own later. You can also contact one of NAAF's telephone support volunteers for a conversation.

## HOW TO IDENTIFY IF YOU NEED COUNSELING TOO

Having a chronic disease can be traumatic. Many people with alopecia areata have a confusing set of emotions, ranging from loss to anger. Seeking help from a mental health care professional may help you understand your feelings of grief, worry, isolation, stress, or other emotions you experience.

Mental health professionals can teach you tools to use when negative or confusing feelings surface. In addition, you can learn how to prevent them from surfacing in the first place. How can you tell if you need counseling? Think about how intensely alopecia areata affects your life. Other signs might be if you're feeling overwhelmed or limiting how much you participate in things you used to do.

Counseling gives you more time to focus on your own specific experiences in a safe and confidential environment. You might be more comfortable sharing issues here instead of in front of a group.

[www.naaf.org](http://www.naaf.org)

