

Minoxidil

Minoxidil is a drug available in two forms to treat different conditions. Oral minoxidil is used to treat high blood pressure and the topical solution form is used to treat hair loss and baldness.

Purpose

Minoxidil was the first drug approved by the FDA for the treatment of androgenetic **alopecia** (hair loss). Before that, minoxidil had been used as vasodilator drug prescribed as oral tablet to treat high blood pressure, with side effects that included hair growth and reversal of male baldness. In the 1980s, UpJohn Corporation came out with a topical solution of 2% minoxidil, called Rogaine, for the specific treatment of androgenetic alopecia. Since the 1990s, numerous generic forms of minoxidil have become available to treat hair loss while the oral form is still used to treat high blood pressure.

The popularity hair loss treatment is due to the general preference in the overall population for the cosmetic appearance of a full head of hair. Minoxidil is used to stimulate hair growth in areas of the scalp that have stopped growing hair. As of early 2001, the exact mechanism of action of minoxidil is not known.

Precautions

People who have had a prior unusual or allergic reaction to either minoxidil or propylene glycol, a non-active chemical in the Rogaine solution, should not use topical minoxidil. People who have had a previous allergic reaction to preservatives or dyes may also be at risk for having an allergic reaction to minoxidil.

People who are using cortisone, or cortisone-like drugs (**corticosteroids**), petroleum jelly (Vaseline), or tretinoin (Retin-A) on their scalps should consult their doctors prior to using minoxidil. The use of any of these products in conjunction with minoxidil may cause excessive minoxidil absorption into the body and increase the risk of side effects.

Also, people who have skin problems or irritations of the scalp, including **sunburn**, may absorb too much minoxidil and increase their risk of side effects.

As for oral minoxidil, the form prescribed for high blood pressure, patients should use minoxidil only under medical supervision to ensure that excessive amounts of the drug are not absorbed into their bodies. Large amounts of minoxidil may increase the severity of the symptoms and side effects of **hypertension**.

Minoxidil may pass from mother to child through breast milk. Therefore, women who are breastfeeding should not use minoxidil