

FINASTERIDE (Propecia/Proscar)

Finasteride is a medication that prevents the conversion of testosterone to its more active form DHT (dihydrotestosterone) by inhibiting an enzyme called 5-alpha reductase type II in the scalp hair follicles. Lower levels of DHT in the scalp can slow down or prevent hair loss. However, because finasteride does not completely block this conversion, it will not completely arrest hair loss.

What evidence do we have that finasteride (Propecia/Proscar) works?

Finasteride has been tested extensively all around the world by scientists and doctors in large clinical trials and was found to be very effective in treating male pattern baldness (androgenetic alopecia). At the end of 2 years after commencing finasteride, it was found that 85% of men retained all the hair they had when they first started treatment, and two thirds of that group actually had more hair.

What should I expect to see while on finasteride (Propecia/Proscar) treatment?

The main aim of treatment is to stop you from becoming bald. Finasteride arrests hair loss and helps you keep the hair that you have left. In other words, if you do not take finasteride, you would expect to lose more hair over the years. Some men have reduced body hair growth while on higher doses of finasteride.

It is important to manage expectations with finasteride treatment as the main aim is to slow or stop the progression of hair loss rather than expecting hair re-growth.

Any re-growth is considered a bonus. Some men actually experience some hair re-growth as early as four months after commencing treatment but it usually takes up to two years before any re-growth is noticed.

For men who start to go bald in their late teens and early twenties, finasteride is a desirable treatment for many to delay the process as long as possible until their thirties or forties when they do not mind the prospect of becoming bald after establishing their careers and family lives.

Why am I losing more hair now when I have just started finasteride (Propecia/Proscar)?

On the balding scalp, there are many hairs sitting in the dormant or resting phase on the scalp. Sometimes, finasteride can cause rapid reactivation of the hair follicles to produce new hairs causing the old hairs to be pushed out all at once so you notice more hair shedding. This is not a serious cause for concern if it happens, and should settle within six months.

What happens if I stop taking finasteride (Propecia/Proscar)?

Once you stop the medication, you will continue to lose your hair and the balding process will take over once again at the same rate had you never have taken finasteride. Finasteride helps to delay this outcome as long as you continue taking this medication.

WARNING: If you have your PSA (prostate specific antigen) checked while on finasteride, you must double your result to get a more accurate measurement of your prostate. This is because finasteride will lower your PSA measurement. Be sure to tell your other doctors that you are on finasteride.