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More Than Half of Postmenopausal Women Experience Female Pattern Hair Loss

New study evaluates prevalence of hair loss during the menopause transition and factors contributing to it, including obesity

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Feb 16, 2022)—Both men and women are more likely to lose their hair with age. Women also have the added risk associated with declines in estrogen levels during the menopause transition. A new study sought to identify the prevalence of female pattern hair loss (FPHL), hair characteristics, and associated factors in healthy postmenopausal women. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Female pattern hair loss is the most common hair loss disorder in women. It is characterized by gradual thinning at the part line, followed by increasing diffuse hair loss radiating from the top of the head. Female pattern hair loss can develop any time between the teenage years and the postmenopause period. However, it is believed that the loss of estrogen during the menopause transition may play a role in accelerating FPHL because estrogen receptors are present in hair follicles. Menopause-related hormone changes have been shown to influence scalp hair, reduce hair diameter, and limit hair growth.

Hair loss can have a significant effect on a woman's self-esteem and overall quality of life because it affects her appearance and confidence. Because women spend, on average, one third of their lives postmenopause, research into causes and treatments of hair loss is critical.

In a new cross-sectional study involving 178 women seen at a menopause clinic, researchers aimed to evaluate the prevalence of FPHL in healthy postmenopausal women and investigate postmenopausal hair characteristics as well as the factors associated with FPHL. Of the women studied, 52.2% were found to have FPHL. The prevalence of FPHL increased with age. Low self-esteem was detected in 60% of participants and increased with the severity of FPHL.

The researchers additionally noted that a high body mass index (obesity) was associated with an increased prevalence and worsening of FPHL in postmenopausal women. Further studies are necessary to determine whether sex steroid hormones, especially estrogen and testosterone, and a history of polycystic ovary syndrome are related to hair loss in postmenopausal women.

Study results are published in the article "Prevalence of female pattern hair loss in postmenopausal women: a cross-sectional study."

"Female pattern hair loss was prevalent and associated with lower self-esteem in healthy postmenopausal women in this small cross-sectional study. A better understanding of the mechanisms responsible for this

common type of hair loss in women may lead to more effective preventive strategies and treatment options,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.