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## Sharing Internet Research About Hair Loss with your Dermatologist

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When hair loss presents, a million questions may be going through your mind. Is this normal daily hair loss? Will it go away on its own? When should I see a dermatologist? What is causing it? It is natural instinct to do a quick internet search to get a bit more direction on what is going on. It is incredibly common to look online for information about your health. In a study conducted by Pew Research Center, it was determined about 77% of adults use a search engine to gain health information with about 59% having done so in the past year.<sup>1</sup> Use of the internet search to search medical conditions is important to help guide care through hair loss, but it is also very important to know what sources to use and how to use this information to assist in guiding your care.

Most importantly, allow your research information to help guide shared-decision making with your doctor about your scarring hair loss. Your involvement in decisions about your health allows for quality healthcare and allows you to have a better understanding of your care. This can help adherence to a care plan and ensure an understanding of the expectations along the way.

Through and beyond a diagnosis of scarring hair loss, when conducting an internet search, there are concepts to keep in mind to create a positive experience with your physician. Board certified dermatologist are trained to structure your visit in a way to gather the necessary information about your hair loss to best determine a course of treatment. Allow the physician to ask you the necessary questions and conduct the pertinent parts of a physical exam, potential biopsy, and recommendations. The best time to bring up your research is when the physician asks you if you have any questions or concerns about your case as your research must have definitely insighted a few questions with how your observations have aligned with the physicians'. This may be at the start of your visit, the middle or the end, but it is important for your doctor to understand your concerns about your care.

Additionally, note where you gathered your research. This can help your dermatologist understand where you got the information and how to best integrate it into your care. There are sources that have good health information and others that may not be as helpful. Your dermatologist can help assess the information you gathered and also help support you by providing suggestions to where you can gain further information in the future.<sup>2</sup> Printing or writing down your findings or questions to help guide your interaction and ensure you have your needs address may also be important to you.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, avoid a self-diagnosis, board certified dermatologists are trained to utilize information gathered in interview, physical exam, and through biopsy to arrive at a conclusion about your hair loss. A combination of information from each piece supports the diagnosis and helps further guide the best course of treatment through and beyond a diagnosis of scarring hair loss. When doing internet research the other pieces of your diagnostic puzzle may be missing and the entire picture may not be considered. However, bringing up the internet research you found may help place the puzzle pieces into one cohesive picture. So be sure to always share your concerns with your healthcare team to complete the puzzle.<sup>3,4</sup>

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