

Hairy ears; Revisited

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Hair can grow in areas which are not usually hairy in human skin. The Online Mendelian Inheritance in Man (OMIM) (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/omim>) have some entries in this regards. These include (%139600 - HAIRY ELBOWS, #605130 - HAIRY ELBOWS, SHORT STATURE, FACIAL DYSMORPHISM, AND DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY, 139630 - HAIRY NOSE TIP, 139500 - HAIRY EARS, and 425500 - HAIRY EARS, Y-LINKED).

Hairy ears, (Fig. 1), are uncommon trait and it is rare to see a person with very long hair on the ears. There is already Guinness World Record for the longest hair on the ears.

This trait is commonly seen in people from some parts of India [1-6] and Sri Lanka [7]. However, it has been observed in other ethnic groups. There are reports of its occurrence in persons from Malta [8], Australia [9], Egypt [10], Malaysia [11], Nigeria [12], and Japan [13].

The increased hair on the ears can involve meatal opening,

pinnae (Hypertrichosis pinnae auris) or the external rim. The type of hair can be lanugo or terminal type of hair.

It was originally described as a Y chromosome-linked trait [5,15]. However, it is believed now that it is not linked to it.

Hairy ears is mainly of a cosmetic concern. However, hairy ears have been described in infants born of diabetic mothers [16,17], a baby with congenital malformation [18], in association with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection [19], in patient with cancer (lanugo hair) [20] and after using some medications [21-23]. There is also report of infection of the ear being precipitated by increased hair on the ears [23].

Increased hair on the ears can be also a feature of conditions and syndromes with generalized hypertrichosis [24,25].

In (Fig. 2), I proposed a clinical scheme to approach a person with hairy ears.

Long hair on the ears can be cut by trimming and can also be removed by shaving, waxing and laser.

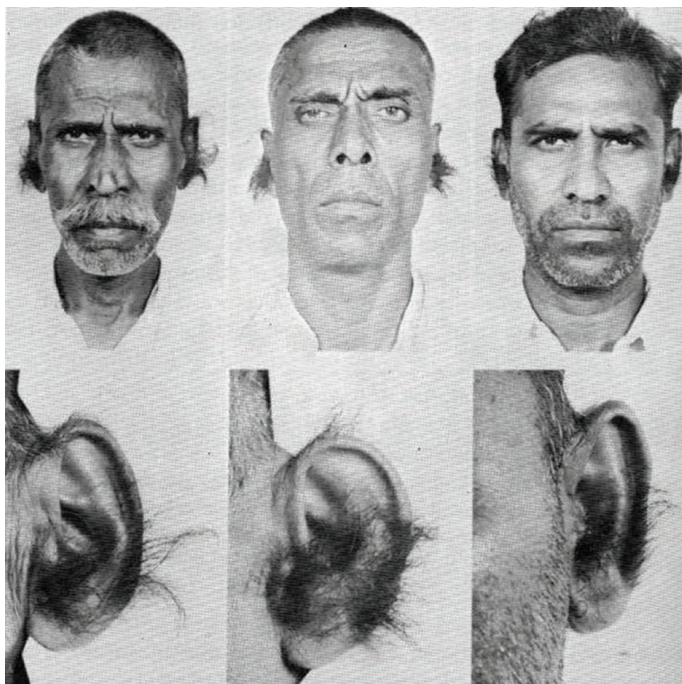


Figure 1. Hairy ears. Available online at: http://www.mun.ca/biology/scarr/Hairy_Ears.html. Courtesy of Dr Steven M Carr, Professor of Biology, Dept. of Biology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's NL A1B 3X9, Canada.

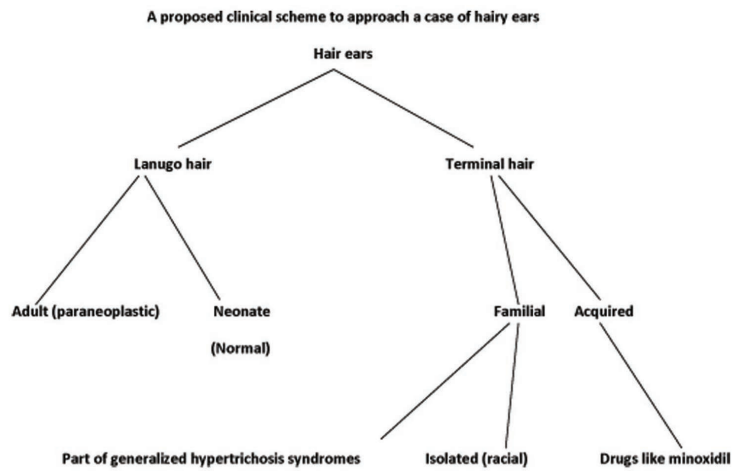


Figure 1. A proposed clinical scheme to approach a person with hairy ears.

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