

Your

GOOD HEALTH

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My bald patches

Overcome with anxiety, Bethany developed a new habit...



Me at 11

TRESS stress

TURN OVER FOR MORE HEALTH

Bethany Stewart, 23, Glasgow

Sitting in my bedroom, I felt so alone. Aged 11, I'd lost three of my beloved grandparents in the space of six months. *I miss them so much, I thought, sadly.* Due to start secondary school soon, I felt overcome with anxiety and stress. Absent-mindedly, I began twisting my long, brunette locks around my finger. Then I felt the overwhelming urge to tug. I winced as I ripped out a chunk of hair. Despite the pain, looking

down at the clump I felt good. It provided me with relief and a sense of control. I started pulling hair out from the back of my head whenever I felt stressed. Six months on, Mum noticed what was happening. 'Love, your hair looks really thin in one spot at the back,' she said gently. 'Are you pulling it out?' 'No, I'm not,' I replied. 'I'm fine.' After that, I styled my hair to hide the bald spots. Three years passed, and my urge to yank tufts from my head grew stronger. Soon, I was left with visible patches all over, and this time they were impossible to hide. Mum took me to the GP. 'You have trichotillomania,' he explained. 'It's a condition

where people, usually teenagers, pull their hair out due to stress.' I was put on a course of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), a type of psychotherapy that helped people manage problems by changing their thinking and behaviour. One strategy was to keep my hands busy when I felt the urge to pull. But sadly, it didn't help. When I was 17, I knew I had to do something. 'If I shave my head, there won't be anything to pull,' I told Mum. 'I'll do it for charity, too.' I quickly realised shaving my head was the best way to help me deal with my trichotillomania and so, to avoid the risk of temptation, I trimmed it every few weeks before it could grow to a pullable length. When I started to venture into dating, I was always upfront about my condition. I had a partner for two and

a half years, and he wasn't bothered about it. While I know CBT helps other people, it didn't work for me, and I've now come to terms with having to live with my condition. I used to feel embarrassed about it but, 12 years on, it's just part of me and who I am.



Me now

WELLBEING NEWS

Wine win Drinking wine every day could halve your risk of a heart attack – but don't reach for the bottle just yet! In a recent study of 1232 participants, scientists found that 'light to moderate' wine drinkers had a lower risk of serious heart problems than teetotallers. However, the health benefits vanish if you drink more than a single glass.



89%

DID YOU KNOW?

A whopping 89% of us use devices like smartphones in bed, yet more than half (56%) think this negatively affects their sleep quality.