



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life.



## HAIR LOSS PREVENTION AND TREATMENTS

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports that 80% of men and half of women experience male or female pattern baldness by age 70. This phenomenon is also known as androgenetic alopecia, the most common type of hair loss. Losing hair can be emotionally challenging, especially for individuals who lose hair at a young age. The NIH reports that hair loss can cause men and women to feel physically and socially less attractive, less likable and less virile, leading to low self-esteem.

Although the incidence of baldness increases with age and certain genetic factors, hair loss is not inevitable or unpreventable in many cases. With more treatments available than ever before, you may be curious about what is effective and if it could work for you. This article explains common causes of hair loss and describes prevention and treatment options.

### What Causes Hair Loss?

To find an effective treatment, you must understand what's causing your hair loss. Therefore, it's recommended that you seek medical guidance from your primary care physician or a certified dermatologist. Your doctor may question you about your hair loss and family history; examine your scalp, nails and other areas with hair loss; and test your hair. Additionally, your doctor may suggest a blood test or a scalp biopsy to check for disease. Possible causes of hair loss include the following:

- Genetics
- Aging

- Fungal infections on the scalp
- Hairstyles that pull the hair too tightly (e.g., hair extensions or tight ponytails)
- Hair treatments that cause damage (e.g., dyes and perms)
- Hormonal changes (e.g., pregnancy or menopause)
- Medical treatment (e.g., chemotherapy)
- Nutritional deficiencies (e.g., lack of iron or protein)
- Stress or grief
- Thyroid disease

In some cases, your hair can regrow on its own. This may be the case if you recently underwent a major physical change, such as having a baby, undergoing surgery or losing a significant amount of weight.

### Signs and Symptoms of Hair Loss

You may be experiencing hair loss if you notice these signs or symptoms:

- Gradual thinning on top of your head
- Circular or patchy bald spots
- Sudden loosening of hair (e.g., large amounts of hair come out when combing or washing)
- Full-body hair loss
- Patches of scaling over the scalp

### Hair Loss Prevention

In certain instances, hairstyle or hair care habits may be contributing to hair loss. Your dermatologist may be able to recommend changes that will prevent further hair damage, such as the following:

- Avoid vigorous rubbing when washing or rinsing your hair.
- Use conditioner after washing your hair.
- Let your hair air-dry as much as possible.
- Use straighteners and blow dryers infrequently.
- Avoid hair products that create a long-lasting hold.
- Wear your hair loosely pulled back and avoid hairstyles that pull your hair.
- Wear light weaves or extensions so they won't pull.
- Maintain your scalp hygiene when wearing a weave or hair extension.
- Increase the time between hair services like perms, touch-ups and relaxers.
- Use a wide-tooth comb and brush your hair gently, as needed.
- Eat a nutrient-rich diet with plenty of omega-3s and other essential fatty acids.

### Hair Loss Treatment

If hair loss is caused by hormonal imbalances, hairstyles, medication or diet, your physician may be able to stop hair loss by correcting the underlying problem. Most hair loss treatments are prescribed to help individuals experiencing male and female pattern hair loss. These treatments include:

- **Minoxidil**—This product is applied to the scalp to help with early hair loss. It often takes between three and 12 months to see results. However, you'll lose the hair growth benefits if you stop applying minoxidil.
- **Finasteride**—This medication can treat certain types of hair loss, such as alopecia, by increasing hair growth along the scalp. It is one of the most common types of hair loss treatment and is available as a topical cream or oral medication.

Typically, finasteride is one of the first types of treatment offered by providers.

- **Corticosteroid injections**—Your dermatologist may inject medication into the bald or thinning areas of your scalp to help your hair regrow. Injections are usually given every four to eight weeks. This is considered the most effective treatment for alopecia areata, a condition that causes hair loss.
- **Hair transplant**—A hair transplant is a permanent and effective solution to hair loss. During this procedure, a dermatologist or cosmetic surgeon will transplant hair from part of the head to a bald area. Hereditary hair loss will eventually still progress after surgery.
- **Laser therapy**—Also known as red light therapy and cold laser therapy, this procedure can increase stimulation and circulation to promote hair growth. It is widely accepted as a safe, less invasive treatment alternative to hair transplant surgery.
- **Supplements**—Since hair loss can be caused by nutritional deficiencies, certain vitamins, such as vitamin B and biotin, may be recommended to avoid hair loss. However, the evidence behind using supplements to prevent hair loss is inconclusive. Additionally, these supplements are not monitored by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
- **Platelet-rich plasma (PRP)**—This treatment involves placing a small amount of blood into a machine that separates the blood into parts. The plasma is then injected into the area with hair loss. PRP takes about 10 minutes and usually requires patients to return once a month for three months and then once every three to six months.

Finding the right treatment for your needs can be challenging. Consult your primary care physician for more information on hair loss treatment and prevention.

### Conclusion

Hair loss can damage your self-confidence and increase stress. If it comes on suddenly, it may also be a symptom of an underlying condition. As such, it's important to

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reach out to your doctor or dermatologist if you experience rapid hair loss or balding. Your doctor can help you determine the right course of treatment to prevent or reverse hereditary hair loss.

Contact your primary care provider today for more information.