

HAIR LOSS AND WOMEN

Most women suffer excessive hair thinning at some time in their lives. Often it follows childbirth and occasionally an illness. Stress can induce hair loss as can dieting or a poor diet generally.

Changes in the hormone levels in the body causes some thinning of the hair in more than half of all women in this country and still more have hair loss in the form of breakage due to the use of poor quality hair products.

In many cases it is temporary and the hair will grow back normally without any help. In others, however, the excessive hair fall, if not treated, will lead to permanent baldness.

So it is vital that the cause of the problem is discovered and the disorder corrected.

This pamphlet explains some of the more common causes of hair loss and what can be done about them.

HAIR LOSS CAUSED BY HORMONAL IMBALANCE

By far the most common type of hair loss experienced by women is that caused by the effect of certain hormones upon the hair. These hormones enter the hair cells and prevent them from growing as well as they should, this results in the characteristic thinning on the front and top of the scalp. The scalp begins to grow finer hairs and the

scalp becomes more visible. There is usually a general loss of "condition" resulting in the hair becoming lank and difficult to control.

This form of hair loss affects 10% of women between the ages of 18-40, 25% by the age of 50 and a staggering 60% by the age of 70.

In many women it is a minor problem and is easily disguised, but other women find it very distressing and lose their self confidence and self esteem.

In the past nothing could be done to prevent this problem occurring but now there are substances which can stop the hair from thinning and can produce a better quality of hair in most women. The treatment consists of using a very low level (and perfectly safe) hormone cream and lotion which are applied externally to the affected region of the scalp. As with most disorders, the earlier the treatment is started the better the results are likely to be.

Approximately 30% of people visiting the Trichological Centre are women who suffer from this hair loss problem.

In virtually every case the hair loss is stopped and the hair growth greatly improved. It is a safe and inexpensive method of combating an all too common and distressing problem.

DIET AND HAIR LOSS

"We are what we eat," as the saying goes. This is particularly true when it comes to our hair. Our hair is affected by what we eat, or do not eat. At the Trichological Centre we constantly see the results of poor diets and crash dieting. Basically, hair has no useful function. The body can work just as well whether it has hair or not. So if the body is short of any nutrient, protein, mineral, iron etc; it will divert these from the hair to nourish the more important body organs. The result can be a Diffuse Hair Loss

Low iron levels (which may not be true clinical iron anaemia) can cause a marked thinning of hair and women are more susceptible to this because of the loss of iron in the blood due to menstruation. Vegetarian diets can cause hair loss unless specific attention is given to the balance of proteins and iron rich foods.

The best advice for producing healthy hair is eating a well balanced diet, of protein, carbohydrates and minerals. Go easy on processed and convenience foods.

A Trichologist can help you in this area by making sure there are no specific foods in your diet which are causing problems.

STRESS RELATED HAIR LOSS

Stress is blamed for causing all types of problems, some times this is true, sometimes it is not. We all suffer from "highs and lows," in our lives. It is important that body stress levels are kept as low as possible. It may not be possible to remove the cause of our stress but there are ways that we can learn to cope with it successfully. Hair loss and stress are inexorably linked.

There is reasonable scientific evidence to show that stress can alter the uptake of certain trace elements and amino acids essential for hair growth. This accounts for about 30% of hair loss in women but it can regrow if the nutritional imbalance is corrected.

There is experimental data to show that high stress levels can increase levels of the hormone prolactin in women and this appears to influence the uptake of testosterone and its metabolism. This can lead to thinning of the hair.

Stress can also cause narrowing of the arteries, restricting blood flow to the scalp. This can induce a temporary shedding of hair in the short term or a permanent loss if the condition continues. Stress can show itself in different ways in different people but the most common symptom is excess hair loss.

There are ways to stop this type of hair loss. The first rule is "don't panic if you experience a heavy hair fall" This in itself will create more stress which in turn will cause more hair fall.

Simply see a Trichologist who will assess the condition and put it right.

PATCHY HAIR LOSS

This is a hair loss condition which is caused by a fault in the immune system of the body. It can be associated with stress. The symptoms are a sudden increase in hair fall associated with patches of baldness. Although this disorder is alarming it rarely spreads to total hair loss and treatment for this condition can be effective. In clinic treatment would include ultra-violet and infra-red therapy combined with the use of stimulating creams and lotions. A holistic assessment is made rather than just treating the symptoms so recommendations for herbal and/or homeopathic therapy are invariably instituted. When the hair grows back it is usually white initially but the natural colour usually returns within a short period of time.

HAIR LOSS AFTER GIVING BIRTH

Post natal hair loss affects 50% of all women who have given birth. A marked increase in hair fall is experienced between the second and seventh month after the child is born. It can be a very frightening and distressing experience and is due to fluctuating hormone levels. Usually the hair loss stops as suddenly as it started and in time all the hair will be replaced. Treatment is not usually given unless the hair loss is excessive or if it continues after month eight.

HAIR LOSS DUE TO BREAKAGE

Hair becomes dry and brittle when there is loss of moisture. This usually leads to the hair splitting and breaking. Causative agents are usually poor chemical treatments i.e. perming, bleaching, colouring, although ill health can also be the cause if breakage of the hair shaft is suspected it is important to see a Trichologist who will carry out a microscopical analysis to determine the true cause.