



Health Fact Sheet

Hair

Although we tend to think of hair in terms of how it contributes to our appearance, in fact the main function of hair is to regulate body temperature by facilitating the evaporation of sweat when it is hot, and creating an additional layer of insulation in winter.

The hair shaft, the part we see, is not actually living tissue. It is 'fed' by tiny blood vessels at the base of every hair follicle which keeps the hair root growing, and we routinely shed anywhere between 100 – 150 hairs every day.

Hair is mainly composed of a protein called keratin, with the colour determined by the presence of a pigment called melanin, produced by pigment cells. As and when these pigment cells die our hair gradually turns grey.

Hair can be a very sensitive measure of the state of our health as hair cells reproduce very quickly, so the health of our hair can indicate certain underlying physical or psychological health conditions. In particular thyroid imbalance, low iron levels, hormonal imbalances and nutritional imbalances can all trigger hair loss and thinning, as can shock, stress, fever, polycystic ovaries and illness. Often however, there is a time lag of up to several months before this becomes noticeable.

Another major contributor to hair loss can be chemicals in hair-care products as can various prescription drugs, including chemotherapy drugs, beta blockers, anticoagulants, arthritis, Parkinson's and other drugs.

Eating sufficient protein is important for healthy hair – but many people who eat good levels of protein still have problems, due to poor protein digestion. This is particularly a problem with those who are stressed and who suffer digestive issues. Taking apple cider vinegar 10 minutes before a protein meal can help to improve the digestion of proteins. If there are assimilation problems, this also needs sorting out, so if you regularly suffer from some sort of digestive discomfort, bloating, wind, constipation, diarrhea etc see a therapist to get this sorted out.

A healthy diet and lifestyle are the easiest ways to maintain beautiful hair. Nutrients such as Omega 3 essential fatty acids, B vitamins, zinc, Vitamins C and E as well as certain amino acids formed from proteins all contribute to healthy hair.

Another cause of hair loss in women approaching the menopause can be the hormonal imbalances that occur at this time. Below are some suggestions to help you counteract hair loss. Keep taking any supplements for several months as it can take some time before you begin to see results.

To counteract stress – the herb ashwaganda. Also take a good Vitamin B Complex, digestive enzymes, and apple cider vinegar before a meal, as well as an Omega 3 supplement.

Nutritional deficiencies – take a good quality multivitamin formulated for women. Also take digestive enzymes with meals to ensure good breakdown and assimilation. Taking this alongside aloe vera juice can increase the body's take-up substantially. Also take an Omega 3 supplement.

Low iron levels – the tonic Floradix is an excellent way to right low iron levels.

Hormonal imbalances – take the herb Agnus Castus (Chaste Tree) which is excellent for both menopausal and non-menopausal women. B vitamins are also important so a good B Complex as well as a multivitamin and mineral complex are also recommended. If symptoms persist ie. Bad PMT, menopause symptoms etc or you have polycystic ovaries see a nutritional therapist who can help establish the right regime for you.

Thyroid imbalances – take an iodine supplement as well as a multivitamin and mineral formulated for women. It can also help to take additional trace minerals.

Ensure your shampoo and hair care products are as gentle and free-from chemicals as possible. Ranges such as Green People, Weleda and Neil's Yard, to name but a few all offer excellent chemical-free shampoos etc as well as ranges such as Aubrey Organics, Avalon, Dr Hauschka etc. There are a great many ranges to choose from nowadays.