

Hair and Hair Loss

At any given time, approximately 10% of the hair is in the resting phase. Two or three months later the resting hair will fall out and new hair will begin to grow in its place. This growing phase lasts anywhere from two to six years. During this phase, on average, each hair strand grows one centimeter per month. Ninety percent of the hair is in the growing phase at any given time. It is normal for a person to lose some hair each day during this cycle.

Some people, however, may lose hair at a higher than average rate. This can affect anyone, men, women, and children during any stage in their life. There are a variety of factors that can result in excessive hair loss. Some people suddenly lose considerable amounts of hair approximately three to four months following a major surgery. This usually happens as a result of the stress of their illness and is generally temporary. However, it can be upsetting and frightening for the person losing their hair. Hormone-related problems may also cause hair loss. As a result of an overactive or under-active thyroid gland, hair may fall out. This can usually be managed by controlling the thyroid disease with medication.

Hair loss can also be caused by a hormonal imbalance of male androgens or female estrogens. Resulting hair loss can be controlled by treating the imbalance. It is also quite common for hair loss approximately three months following the delivery of a baby. This hair loss results from hormonal changes occurring in her body. When a woman is pregnant, she produces elevated hormone levels that enable her body to retain hair that would normally fall out. Once the hormones have returned to the pre-pregnancy levels, the hair begins to fall out again and the body resumes normal hair growth and loss cycles.

Certain medicines can lead to hair loss. Once the offending medication is discontinued, people often find their hair loss ceases. Medications such as anticoagulants or blood thinners, medicines for treating gout, antidepressants, chemotherapy medications, excessive amounts of vitamin A, and birth control pills all can lead to hair loss. Certain infections can also cause hair loss. One example is common fungal infections of the scalp in children. These types of infections can be easily treated with antifungal medications and the growth soon reoccurs. Particular diseases like diabetes or lupus can also cause hair loss. Hair loss is often considered to be a warning indicator for disease. Therefore it is important to determine and treat the cause.

Improper hair care can also cause hair loss. Hairstyles like pigtails or cornrows, and tight rollers all pull at the hair causing a condition called traction alopecia. However, this condition can be prevented if the pulling is discontinued prior to causing scalp scarring. It is important to note that scarring can result in permanent hair loss. Hot oil treatments and chemicals used in permanents waves also cause the hair follicle to swell, which can result in scarring and therefore permanent hair loss.