Be careful with hair transplants

Bald men are advised against this procedure if they are still very young.

Many men begin to lose their hair before the age of 30. Credit: Shutterstock

By Pedro Frisneda
Dec 05, 2014, 06:12 AM EST

Hair transplantation for those who can afford it—is one of the most effective surgical and aesthetic procedures for men who have gone bald and wish to regain their original appearance.

However, experts warn that undergoing this procedure at a very young age can have negative and irreversible consequences. This warning comes as there has been an increase in the number of young people between 20 and 30 years old, and even

teenagers, resorting to this procedure.

“We have seen hair transplants being performed on teenagers as young as 15, 16, and 17, which can be very dangerous and is bordering on medical negligence,” says Dr. **Abraham Armani** , medical director of **Armani Medical in Dallas** , a clinic that specializes in hair transplantation and restoration.

The problem, Armani explains, is that when a man is very young, a pattern of hair loss has not yet been established, so it is not yet known how quickly and how much hair he will lose.

“The hair is taken from the back of the head and transplanted to the front. This hair is permanent, and if the young man continues to lose hair rapidly, in the next 5 to 20 years, the rest of his head will be bald and he will only have the hair on the front,” says Dr. Armani.

“Furthermore, she will continue to need more transplants to replace the lost hair. When she is 50 or 60 years old, her hairline will be very low and won't look natural, because it won't be appropriate for her age,” the expert adds.

The doctor clarifies that hair transplantation can only be done using the patient's own hair, not someone else's. A man only has a limited amount of hair that can be transplanted, so if he begins the procedure at a very young age, he risks running out of donor hair before covering the bald area.

The doctor advises those interested in a transplant to wait until they are older, when their hair loss pattern has been established. “Age is an important factor. The younger a man is, especially if he is in his 20s, the less likely he is to be a good candidate. Also, if they are losing their hair at a very rapid rate, they shouldn't have a transplant.”

The patient's family history is also studied. If it indicates that they will lose a lot of hair when they are young, then they are not a good candidate either.

“Very young patients, or teenagers, do not have the level of maturity to understand the consequences of a surgical procedure like this, which has permanent and irreversible results,” emphasizes the doctor, who suggests that they educate themselves about other options such as medications.

If you are experiencing hair loss, Armani advises visiting a board-certified hair restoration specialist. The safest option for finding one is to contact the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery.

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Hair loss can be caused by many reasons, but the most common is known as male pattern baldness, which occurs as men age. This is caused by a specific hormone called DHT (dihydrotestosterone), which weakens the hair root and makes the hair follicle increasingly fragile until it eventually dies. All men have this hormone, but in varying amounts, and it is the DHT receptor genes that determine whether or not they will experience hair loss.

There are other factors that can cause baldness, such as side effects caused by some medications, as well as hormonal problems or thyroid diseases, among others.

There are two approved medications that have proven effective in treating hair loss.

Propecia: This is a once-a-day pill that blocks the production of the hormone DHT, which stops or slows hair loss and, in some cases, helps hair grow back. Men should be patient, as it can usually take up to a year to see positive results.

Rogaine: This is a liquid applied to the scalp that also helps reduce hair loss. It can be used in conjunction with Propecia to make the treatment more effective.

A small number of patients (between 2 and 4%) have reported side effects such as reduced libido or sexual function, but most users do not experience any problems.