

Simone Olivero

Everything you need to know about female hair loss

Simone Olivero

Wed, December 16, 2015 at 5:37 a.m. GMT+10:30

Notice your hair isn't quite as thick or shiny as it used to be? You're not alone.

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, around 80 per cent of women notice some sort of hair loss or recession of their hair line as they get older. While this is a natural occurrence, it can be quite an upsetting one.

Hoping to get more insight into why this happens, *Yahoo Canada* spoke with Dallas-based hair transplant surgeon, [Dr. Abraham Armani](#).

Is female pattern baldness a thing?

Female pattern hair loss (FPHL) is a condition that affects millions of women. FPHL is actually the most-common cause of hair loss in women. This is seen as hair thinning predominantly over the top (widening of the part of the hair) and sides of the head while retaining the hairline upfront. Unfortunately, FPHL is a progressive condition, which means women tend to continue losing hair.

How does this differ from male pattern baldness?

Male pattern baldness is easily recognized. It usually starts with a receding hairline and a progression of hair loss over the crown of the head, while hair density is mostly retained over the area above the ears and the back of the scalp. Men with male pattern baldness have inherited hair follicles that are genetically susceptible to the male hormone called Dihydrotestosterone (DHT).

Is there a certain age where women begin to experience hair loss or thinning?

Normal hair fall is approximately 100-125 hairs per day. But, these hairs are replaced. True hair loss occurs when lost hairs are not regrown or when the daily hair shed exceeds 125 hairs.

For most women, FPHL begins in midlife, when a woman is in her 40s, 50s, or 60s. It can begin earlier for some women. Without treatment, female pattern hair loss can progress from a widening part to overall thinning. Not every women who has this type of hair loss will develop overall thinning. It affects approximately one-third of all susceptible women, but is most commonly seen after menopause, although it may begin as early as puberty.

By comparison, a quarter of all men start experiencing hair loss before turning 21. Their ranks jump to two-thirds of all men by age 35, and by 50, almost 85 per cent of men have significantly thinning hair.

Aside from normal aging, what are some other possible causes for hair loss?

Besides FPHL, other factors that may cause hair loss include physical or emotional stresses, surgery, medication, illness, anemia, hormonal disorders (thyroid/testosterone/pregnancy), rapid weight change or nutritional deficiency. Most of these conditions can be detected by a simple blood test.

Are some people more susceptible to hair loss than others?

Yes. This is mostly determined by our genes. Genetically, hair loss can come from either parent's side of the family. There have been over 100 genes identified to affect hair loss.

Any hair loss myths?

Definitely! These are a few of my favourites:

- Frequent shampooing contributes to hair loss.
- Dandruff causes permanent hair loss.
- Permanent hair loss is caused by perms, colours and other cosmetic treatments.
- Shaving one's head will cause the hair to grow back thicker.
- There are cosmetic products that will cause the hair to grow thicker and faster.

What is alopecia?

Alopecia simply means hair loss – or baldness – in both men and women, and can

have many causes. Some causes are considered natural, while others signal serious health problems. Some conditions are confined to the scalp, while others reflect disease throughout the body. Being plainly visible, the skin and its components can provide early signs of disease elsewhere.

So what can we do to prevent this from happening?

Diet plays an essential part in healthy hair growth. Proteins are one of the very important nutrients to stimulate hair growth significantly. High protein content foods like beans, cheese, milk, nuts, grains and meats should be included in your daily diet. Since lack of dietary iron weakens hair and causes them to fall excessively, spinach, soybeans, chicken, meat, eggs and fish should be eaten to increase iron intake.

What about hair products that promise to thicken?

These shampoos can help your hair hold moisture, which makes hair look fuller and thicker or decrease breakage, which can reduce thinning. While hair loss shampoos may help, they cannot regrow hair or prevent hair loss from worsening.

What about products like Rogaine?

Rogaine (topical minoxidil) is the only FDA-approved medication currently available for female pattern hair loss and can prevent hair loss from worsening, helping women regrow their hair. Besides hair transplantation, this is the most common and effective treatment option for women. Today, it is the most-recommended treatment for FPHL. Products containing either 2% or 5% minoxidil have been approved to treat FPHL. Women starting minoxidil should know that for the first 2 to 8 weeks, they may notice a temporary increase in hair loss. This stops when hair begins to regrow.

A common side effect of minoxidil is an irritated scalp, which may cause dryness, scaling, itching and/or redness on your scalp. If this happens, it's best to stop using minoxidil and see a hair restoration specialist. Women who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant should avoid minoxidil. Studies of

pregnant animals have shown minoxidil can be harmful to a developing fetus. Women who are breastfeeding should also avoid minoxidil. Traces of minoxidil may pass into breast milk, which can be harmful to a nursing infant. It's probably best to consult with your family doctor before trying a treatment like this.

And if none of these things work?

There are a few options.

Hair transplant: Long used to treat hair loss in men, a hair transplant may be an option for some women with FPHL. However, not everyone is a good candidate for a hair transplant. If the hair on your scalp is sparse all over, you may not have enough healthy hair to transplant. A hair transplant surgeon, many of whom are dermatologists, can tell you if a hair transplant may help restore your hair.

Lasers: The FDA [and Health Canada] has approved laser combs, helmets and other devices, which are available without a prescription, to treat hair loss at home. These devices emit a low level of laser light that may help stimulate new hair growth. A few studies show that this can be effective for treating FPHL.

Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy: This therapy uses your own blood. After a blood draw, the blood is placed into a machine that separates the blood into its different components. The platelets, which are a type of blood cell, are treated and injected into your scalp. It is believed the platelets help stimulate your cells to enhance hair growth.

Stem cells: Using stem cells to treat FPHL is still in the experimental stages. Like platelet-rich plasma therapy, more studies are needed to know whether stem cells are a safe and effective treatment for FPHL.

Supplements: Many supplements, including biotin and folic acid, are said to help grow and thicken hair. In studying these different supplements, the findings have been mixed. In most studies, the supplements had no effect on hair growth and thickness but it's something to consider.