

NATURE CURE

FALLING OF HAIR



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Loss of hair at a very tender age has become a common disorder these days. It causes a great deal of concern to persons affected by loss of hair, especially Indian women who regard good hair growth with thick long hair as a sign of beauty.

Hair is formed in minute pockets in the skin, called follicles. An up growth at the base of the folic, called the papilla, actually produces hair; when a special group of cells turn amino acids into keratin, a type of protein of which hair is made. The rate of production of these protein "building blocks." determines hair growth. The average growth rate is about 1.2 cm per month, growing faster on women between the ages 15 and 30.

Causes

The most important cause of loss of hair is inadequate nutrition. Even a partial lack of almost any nutrient may cause hair to fall. Persons lacking vitamin B6 lose their hair and those deficient in folic acid often become completely bald. But the hair grows normally after the liberal intake of these vitamins.

Another important cause of falling of hair is stress such as worry, anxiety and sudden shock. Stress leads to a severe tension in the skin of the scalp. This adversely affects the supply of essential nutrition required for the healthy growth of the hair. General debility, syphilis, chronic cold, influenza and anemia, also gives rise to this disorder. It makes the roots of the hair weak, resulting in the falling of hair. Unclean condition of the scalp can also cause loss of hair. It weakens the hair roots by blocking the pores with the collected dirt. Heredity is another predisposing factor which may cause hair to fall.

Treatment

The healthy condition of the hair depends, to a very large extent, on the intake of sufficient amounts of essential nutrients in the daily diet. Hair is made of protein and adequate protein is necessary for luxuriant hair. Women require 60 grams, men 80 to 90, adolescent boys and girls 80 to 100 grams of protein. It is supplied by milk, buttermilk, yogurt, soybean, eggs, cheese, meat and fish. A lack of vitamin A may cause the hair to be coarse and ugly. A deficiency of some of the B vitamins, of iron, copper and iodine may cause hair disorders like falling of hair and premature greying.

Lack of inositol causes loss of hair. Any person having trouble with his or her hair should eat foods rich in inositol such as yeast, liver and molasses. Research has, however, shown that women have a low requirement of inositol. Although this vitamin may help to stimulate the growth of a woman's hair, its lack is probably not a major cause of slow growth. Women are generally deficient in iodine and vitamin B₁, either of which can slow down circulation to the scalp to such an extent that hair may fall out and new hair grow in very slowly. Women who keep their diets adequate in iodine, the B vitamins and iron have a better growth of hair.

According to Adelle Davis, a world famous nutritionist, "increasing the intake of protein, particularly of liver, wheat germ and yeast, and supplementing the diet with a teaspoon of inositol daily usually stops a man's hair from falling, and I have seen three or four persons whose hair became thick after these improvements were made." Persons with a tendency to lose hair should thus take a well-balanced and correct diet, made up of foods which in combination should supply all the essential nutrients. It has been

found that a diet which contains liberal quantities of (i) seeds, nuts and grains, (ii) vegetables and (iii) fruits would provide adequate amounts of all the essential nutrients. Each food group should roughly form the bulk of one of the three principal meals. These foods should , however, be supplemented with certain special foods such as milk, vegetable oils, honey, wheat germ, yeast and liver.

Home Remedies

Several home remedies have been found useful in the prevention and treatment of the loss of the hair. The most effective among these remedies is a vigorous rubbing of the scalp with fingers after washing the hair with cold water. The scalp should be rubbed vigorously till it starts to tingle with the heat. It will activate the sebaceous glands and energize the circulation of blood in the affected area, making the hair grow healthy.

Amla oil, prepared by boiling dry pieces of amla in coconut oil, is considered a valuable hair tonic for enriching hair growth. A mixture of equal quantity of fresh amla juice and lime juice used as a shampoo stimulates hair growth and prevents hair loss.

Lettuce (salad-ka-patta) is useful in preventing hair loss through deficiencies. A mixture of lettuce and spinach juice is said to help the growth of hair if it is drunk to the extent of half a litre a day. The juice of alfalfa (lecerne) in combination with carrot and lettuce juice, taken daily also helps the growth of hair to a remarkable extent. The combination of these juices is rich in elements which are particularly useful for the growth of hair. While preparing alfalfa juice, the leaves of the plant only may be used when it can be obtained fresh.

Daily application of refined coconut oil mixed with limewater and lime juice on the hair, prevents loss of hair and lengthens them. Application of the juice of green coriander leaves on the head is also considered beneficial. Amaranth, known as chaulai-ka-saag in the vernacular, is another valuable remedy. Application of its fresh leaf-juice helps the growth of the hair and keeps them soft.

Mustard oil, boiled with henna leaves, is useful in healthy growth of hair. About 250 grams of mustard oil should be boiled in tinned basin. A little quantity of henna leaves should be gradually put in this oil till about 60 grams of these leaves are thus burnt in the oil. The oil should then be filtered through a cloth and stored well in a bottle. A regular massage of the head with this oil will produce abundant hair.

Another effective home remedy for loss of hair is the application of coconut milk all over the scalp and massaging it into the hair loss. It will nourish the hair and promote hair growth. The coconut milk is prepared by grinding the coconut shavings and squeezing it well. Washing the hair with a paste of cooked black gram dal, (urad dal) and fenugreek (methi) lengthens the hair. A fine paste made from pigeon pea or red gram (arhar dal) can also be applied regularly with beneficial results on bald patches. Regular use of castor oil as hair oil helps the luxuriant growth of the hair.

Certain home remedies have also been found useful in case of patchy loss of hair. The seeds of lime and black pepper seeds, ground to get a fine paste, is one of the valuable remedies. This paste applied on the patches, has mildly irritant action. This increases blood circulation in the affected area and stimulates hair growth. The paste should be applied twice a day for a few weeks.

Another useful remedy for patchy loss of hair is the paste of liquorice (mulethi) made by grinding the pieces in milk with a pinch of saffron. This paste should be applied over the bald patches in the night before going to bed.