



By Dr Michael Elstein

HAIR LOSS UPDATE

One of the unfortunate consequences of ageing is losing hair where aesthetically we think we need it the most and growing it in parts which are deemed unsightly. This cosmetic assault on our dignity has spawned a massive and lucrative industry. The irony is that it has a lot to do with testosterone, the hormone that has sparked the resurgence of a creative movement graphically documenting the carnal gymnastics that both sexes get up to in books like 'Fifty Shades of Grey.' Actually it's the more potent form of the male hormone testosterone, known as dihydrotestosterone that goes into overdrive, leading to undue shedding of hair, which makes us so unattractive. In order to regain our appeal so that testosterone can execute its essential function, treatments have been developed, including the massively popular drug Propecia, to put the party pooping dihydrotestosterone back in its place. Genetic testing is even now available, which will predict excessive sensitivity to dihydrotestosterone, allowing medications to be commenced early before hair loss becomes prodigious. Another medication called dutasteride, currently used to treat enlargement of the prostate, also thought in part to be due to the over-activity of dihydrotestosterone, has been trialled and been found to be more effective than Propecia for treating hair loss, but at a higher dose.

Other hormone like substances called prostaglandins have also been found to be connected with hair loss and recently two medications with prostaglandin like effects, bimatoprost, known commercially as Latisse, has been used to promote eyelash growth, while latanoprost (Xalatan) has also been found to stimulate hair re-growth.

Aside from the scalp treatment Minoxidil, which slows hair loss and may also stimulate new growth, the anti-fungal shampoo ketoconazole, which has suppressive effects on dihydrotestosterone, has also been found to improve hair growth.

One clinic in Los Angeles, where instantaneous hair needs to be delivered more promptly than fast food, have devised a product called NuH Hair, a combination of finasteride, (the generic form of Propecia) dutasteride, and Minoxidil, blended in a hypoallergenic lotion, to which they added Rogaine (Minoxidil again) foam, Propecia, and ketoconazole shampoo. Not surprisingly in the town where Movie magic happens significant re-growth was observed in less than one month.

Innovative treatments that mimic stem cell technology are becoming increasingly available, which involve isolating cells from hair follicles growing them in a culture and then re-injecting them, as well as using the culture to birth a compound rich in hair growth promoting factors. What's also gaining in popularity is platelet rich plasma isolated from whole blood. Platelets, components of the blood which help to put the brakes on bleeding with injury, have multiple growth factors that are capable of stimulating hair growth.

For women the female hormone oestrogen used on the scalp and taken orally can achieve positive results and there is even one study demonstrating that those with low testosterone might even benefit from supplementing with this hormone.

HAIR LOSS UPDATE..... Continued

A condition known as alopecia areata, when hair loss occurs in clumps and can be a self-limiting disorder, is thought to be related to the immune system inadvertently attacking hair follicles. Evidence that a bug in the stomach called helicobacter pylori, usually connected with ulcers, might be one of the culprits switching on the immune system by mistake along with gluten, the food substance that is part of coeliac disease.

For both sexes iron, zinc and protein status together with thyroid hormone levels need to be assessed, as deficiencies of these can also lead to hair loss.

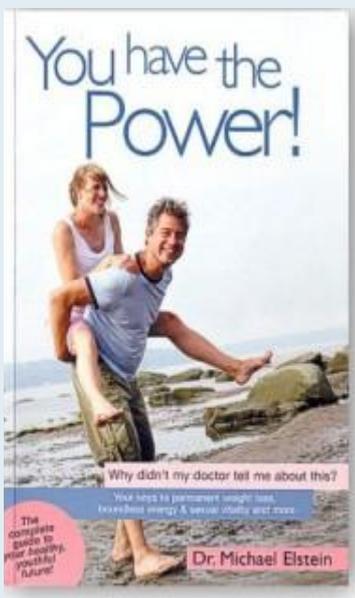
Natural treatments might be less instantaneous than pharmaceutical potions but there is evidence that lavender oil in combination with the essential oils from thyme, rosemary, and cedarwood, when applied daily to the scalp, improves hair growth after after 7 months of treatment. Then there is research showing that beta-sitosterol 50 mg and the herb saw palmetto extract 200 mg taken twice daily, both inhibiting dihydrotestosterone, benefit hair re-growth. For alopecia areata, or hair loss in clumps, taking zinc and biotin together with applying raspberry ketone, a new treatment for weight loss, at a dose of 0.01% to the scalp once nightly for 5 months, have been shown to increase hair growth.

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Q&A With Dr Michael Elstein

QUESTION

My girlfriend, who is 38 with 1 child, has severe migraines every 2 or 3 days. These started when she was 11 and reached puberty. Could this be hormonal? She also has severe PMS that puts her in bed with severe cramping for 3 days each month and is followed by a migraine which often causes her to throw up from the pain. What would you suggest? I have read studies that tribulus can help these symptoms by balancing the hormones. Have you done any research on tribulus in women with migraines or PMS?

ANSWER

What causes migraines is complex and in your girlfriend's case both major female hormones, oestrogen and progesterone, may be implicated. Severe PMS followed by migraine suggests that low oestrogen levels, which occur around this time, may be involved. I would suggest you find a doctor who knows how to assess hormone status appropriately during the menstrual cycle. Investigating food allergy, liver function and nutritional deficiencies can also be worthwhile. Nutrients like magnesium, riboflavin or vitamin B2 and coenzyme Q10 have the capacity to prevent migraines, as do certain herbal remedies, including feverfew and butterbur. There is no good scientific evidence which suggests that tribulus can boost female hormone production and certainly no evidence that taking tribulus inhibits migraines.

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