



# the thick of it

When it comes to hair, big and bouncy is the holy grail. *Stephanie Darling* investigates solutions for thinning locks.

**H**air loss in both women and men can occur as a result of many things: hormonal changes, genetic predisposition and some medical conditions, such as stress. On average, we lose between 50 and 100 hairs a day. This level of shedding is a normal part of our hair's growth cycle. But, according to the Dermatology Institute of Victoria, "when hair shedding exceeds this range, it may be considered hair loss and could indicate an underlying issue".

The first step in addressing this concern is getting a diagnosis and treatment plan, either from your GP or a dermatologist. Dr Ritu Gupta, a dermatologist, says thinning hair is usually a familial trait, but it "is not as simple as it originating from the mother or father ... there are lots of genes involved".

According to the institute, genetic changes can cause the hair-growth cycle

to shorten, leading to finer and shorter hairs until growth ceases entirely. In men, thinning mostly happens at the temples and the crown, while women usually experience it along the part line.

Temporary hair loss can sometimes occur after periods of stress, illness or hormonal changes, a condition known as telogen effluvium. Alopecia areata is an autoimmune response where the body attacks hair follicles, causing patches to fall out, while traction alopecia results from long-term tension, such as from having excessively tight ponytails or buns.

There are myriad shampoos that claim to help, but do they work? "All shampoos do is work on the hair shaft," says Gupta. "The hair bulb is rooted deep in the dermis, so nothing applied to the hair affects the actual hair bulb. Shampoos can improve the appearance of the hair but they do not affect hair growth or hair loss."

Still, so-called "growth" shampoos have scalp-friendly ingredients that can create a healthier environment for hair to grow. Our top picks for thickening shampoos and conditioners include Routine Wellness Shampoo and Conditioner (\$107); Nioxin Scalp + Hair Thickening System 2 (\$110), which targets hair breakage; and Pureology Hydrate Shampoo and Conditioner (\$118), for great volume.

The final frontier on the hair-loss journey is a hair transplant. Gupta explains that the most important thing is to be referred to a reputable surgeon, who will also provide medication to support the transplant after the procedure.

To maintain healthy hair, it is important to eat a diet rich in iron, biotin, zinc, vitamin D and protein, which can be found in eggs, sweet potatoes, nuts and seeds, oily fish, red meat, avocados, berries and spinach.



## ask STEPH

**Should I give my toenails a break from nail polish?**

Wearing polish for extended periods can cause nail dehydration, damage and discolouration. Take a month off, slather your nails in cuticle oil, and keep them short and buffed. Try Sally Hansen Vitamin E Nail and Cuticle Oil (\$18).

Send questions via Instagram, @mrssdarling.

## the LOVE list



**We treat our face and body to doses of luxury, so why should our hair miss out? Here we have a delicious scent, a serum dusted with gold and a nourishing mask.** Hermès Barénia Scented Hair Mist, \$85. The Clearing 24-carat Gold Scalp and Hair Oil, \$95. Belinda Jeffrey Hair Colour Care Masque, \$70.