

# What's your hair trying to tell you?

IT'S MEANT TO BE OUR CROWNING GLORY, BUT INEVITABLY OUR HAIR CHANGES AS WE GET OLDER. HOWEVER, THERE COULD BE OTHER REASONS FOR A SHIFT IN HAIR HEALTH, AS DR ELLIE EXPLAINS...

**H**air loss in women accounts for a surprisingly high number of GP consultations every year. Far from being simply a cosmetic issue, hair loss can actually be the sign of an underlying medical issue requiring treatment.

Thinning hair and baldness are distressing for any woman – here's my guide to the possible causes.

## WATCH YOUR THYROID

One in 50 people in the UK have an underactive thyroid, which is the gland at the front of the neck that controls a lot of functions in the body. Hair loss is a very obvious, and often one of the first, really noticeable symptoms. Women notice their hair thinning generally all over and falling out far more than normal when brushing. The hair loss reverses when treatment starts.

## ITCHY INFECTION

Small bald patches on the scalp can be the result of a fungal scalp infection, known as tinea. This is usually easy to diagnose as it comes with a very itchy scalp, sore scaly patches, and sometimes crusting.

Your doctor can prescribe an antifungal shampoo and antifungal tablets to cure the scalp, and the hair should regrow. To get started, antifungal shampoos are easily available from the pharmacist.



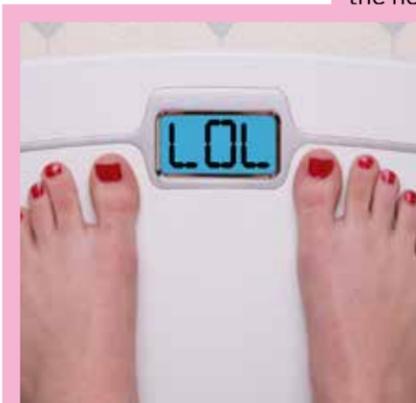
## STOCK UP ON IRON

Having thinning hair is often said to be a sign of anaemia, which is caused by a lack of iron. But actually it's related to the stores of iron, known as ferritin, within the body. If your ferritin levels are low, even if you are not anaemic, your hair can shed dramatically. Your doctor can detect this with a blood test, and it can be cured with iron supplements.

## DITCH THE DIET

Crash dieting is never a good idea, even if you lose weight, you could also lose hair. Hair thinning from crash dieting occurs all over the head, and shedding is very noticeable.

The same type of shedding can occur after emotional stress, such as a bereavement or physical trauma, such as an accident. There is no specific treatment, but it does usually start to grow back within six months.



## HAPPY HORMONES

For good hair growth, women need high levels of the hormone oestrogen. Around the menopause, oestrogen drops, accounting for hot flushes, mood changes and thinning hair. The amount varies, some women won't notice, but for others it would be significant. If the oestrogen was replaced, with HRT for example, hair would improve, although it wouldn't normally be prescribed just for this reason.



## CHECK YOUR PILLS

Most people are aware that significant hair loss can be a very dramatic side effect of chemotherapy. But other medicines can cause a less drastic hair loss, too. Widespread thinning of your hair can be a result of taking beta blockers, a tablet used for anxiety, blood pressure and heart failure. Blood thinners, for example warfarin used in the treatment of blood clots, can also thin your hair.

## IMMUNE SYSTEM ISSUES

When hair loss occurs in patches like bald discs on the scalp, it may be from a condition known as alopecia areata. This is an 'auto-immune' condition, which means your immune system is attacking your own body. It runs in families, and is more common in people with other auto-immune conditions like Type 1 diabetes and thyroid disease. There is no treatment, but it does usually regrow within six to 12 months.

# Look younger with Lesley



Anti-ageing guru **Lesley Reynolds** reveals the latest treatments to help you stay youthful

Millions of women are suffering in silence from facial hair, with many of us feeling uncomfortable talking about it. Here's how to tackle the taboo subject.

## ZAP IT

**IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) works by targeting the pigment in the hair, and uses high-intensity light beams on the skin, sending the light down the shaft of hair.**

The light hits the bulb of the hair and shatters it. If the hair is in the growing stage the root

will be destroyed and that hair won't grow again. However, hair grows in three phases, so you have a one-in-three chance the hair will be destroyed.

It's not successful on grey or blonde hair, or black and Asian skin. You also have to grow the hair a little before treatment. Cost: from £400 for a course.

## THREAD IT

**This natural method of hair removal originated in Asia. A thread is literally wound around the hairs, which are then quickly pulled out.**

Great for the upper lip and eyebrows leaving a clean line. Expect two to six weeks before regrowth. It's quick, cheap, effective and safe, and can be done on tiny hairs and all hair types. The upper lip area can be painful, try eyebrows first. Costs can be as little as £10.



## WAX IT

**This treatment can be done at the salon or at home. A cheap option for fine hair and it takes from two to six weeks before you get any regrowth.**

Too much waxing can cause

ingrowing hairs and it can sometimes irritate the hair follicles, which results in pimples.

Over-the-counter products cost from £2, and salon treatment varies, from £20.

## AND DON'T FORGET...

- As we get older, rogue hairs can suddenly sprout all over the face, including the chin, upper lip and even sideburns can appear on the sides of our cheeks – blame those hormones.

- For sporadic hairs or those witchy, long ones sprouting on the chin, tweezers will do the job quickly painlessly and privately.

- If you've experienced significant hair growth over a short period you should make an appointment with your GP, as occasionally it can be a sign of a hormone imbalance disorder, such as polycystic ovaries.

- Moles that contain hair should always be checked before undergoing any treatment.

For more information on Lesley and her team of doctors, please visit [harleystreetskinclinic.com](http://harleystreetskinclinic.com)