Stress leads to hair loss? [1]

Dear Alice,

Does stress promote hair loss?

?Losing it

Answer

Dear Losing it,

Are you feeling like it's hair today, gone tomorrow? No matter what the cause, hair loss can be stressful. Most people lose 50 to 100 hairs a day. When the rate of shedding exceeds that of the rate of growth, hair thinning may be noticeable. Some types of hair loss may occur in reaction to stressful situations, though there may be other causes as well, such as diet. Or, your hair may simply be following its normal growth/rest cycle. The growth phase of this cycle (anagen) can last for two to three years, followed by a three to four month rest period (telogen). Typically, during the growth phase your hair will grow about half an inch per month and during the rest phase you may notice more hair loss than usual.

Telogen effluvium, one type of hair loss that may begin after experiencing some type of emotional or physical shock, occurs when hair roots prematurely begin the resting phase. Although hair grows back after telogen effluvium, this may take months. Some women may experience postpartum alopecia, a type of telogen effluvium that is caused by the sudden change in hormone levels. Alopecia areata is another type of hair loss that may be caused by stress. For more information about additional causes of hair loss, check out Pre-mature hair loss [2] in the Go Ask Alice! General Health archives.

You asked about hair loss in reference to stress. If you have been feeling stressed, it may be helpful to find healthy coping mechanisms. It may also be the case that your perceived hair loss is stressing you out. Some helpful tips for dealing with stress can be found in Stress, anxiety, and learning to cope [3] in the Go Ask Alice! Emotional Health archives. Additionally, joining a support group or talking to your family and friends about your concerns may be helpful.
If you feel that hair loss is affecting your life, you may want to discuss this with a health care provider, who can determine what's going on. You can also contact a counselor, or other mental health professional, to make an appointment to discuss coping with stress. For more information about different types of hair loss, you can visit the American Hair Loss Association [4] website.

Finally, keep in mind that although there are various hair loss remedies out there, this does not necessarily mean that they are all safe. Make sure to discuss any plans to begin a hair loss remedy with a health care provider. And remember, you may feel that you are losing your hair, but hopefully, learning more about it will help you feel more in control of the situation.

Alice!
Category:
General Health [5]
Hair [6]

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