

Bald truth about keeping your hair on

There are successful treatment options for those worried about thinning locks.

On average, human hair grows for between two and six years at a centimetre a month before shedding painlessly – in the shower, on the pillow, through the teeth of a comb.

Depending on the length of your genetically determined growth phase, you shed 50-100 hairs a day. The cycle starts again, with healthy hair replaced by healthy hair.

Hair loss – known as male pattern baldness and female pattern thinning – occurs when the hair that is shed is replaced either by weaker hair or not replaced at all.

“Hair loss is like leaking bucket syndrome – you have a certain amount of hair that’s just leaking out and not being replaced properly,” says The Knudsen Clinic founder Dr Russell Knudsen. “Surgery is one thing we can do – taking hair from the back of the scalp and implanting it at the front. But it doesn’t stop further loss down the track – the leak continues.

“The first thing you have to do is convince patients that you can’t cure them, you can only treat them. And the best way to do that is through medication designed to fix the leak, to stop further hair loss.”

Dr Knudsen recommends seeing your local doctor, a dermatologist or a hair loss specialist as a first port of call, and avoiding the countless remedies offered at the tap of a keyboard, “which are usually nonsensical”.



Dr Russell Knudsen says medical treatment does not have to be expensive.

When he started in the industry in 1982, Dr Knudsen says literally nothing could slow or stop hair loss. Now there are options and they don’t need to be prohibitively expensive. “The problem we have is young people go through this cycle of being poorly educated, trying this and trying that and they’re the least capable of being able to afford expensive treatment programs,” Dr Knudsen says. “The reality is, excluding surgery,

medical treatment for hair loss does not have to be expensive. It can be quite a manageable cost of \$5-10 a week, not the hundreds of dollars a month that some companies charge.”

A breakthrough came with the lotion minoxidil, released in Australia in 1989, which Dr Knudsen says was the first stimulant proven to slow hair loss. Finasteride followed in 1998, “so we’ve had 20 years of

prescription help in controlling balding”.

Light-based therapy, or laser stimulation, is another option. Surgical treatment is available for patients whose hair loss is unbearably devastating, but the key, says Dr Knudsen, is that patients understand there is no miracle cure and that taking prescribed medication as early as possible helps to bring about the best outcome.

“Patients often lose faith because they make the mistake of thinking a treatment hasn’t worked because they haven’t got more hair. I ask them, ‘But did it get worse?’ They usually answer ‘no’. ‘And what happened when you stopped?’ They usually answer, ‘It got worse.’ I then tell them, ‘So, it worked.’

“No improvement doesn’t mean failure, it means you didn’t deteriorate. That’s stability, and stability is a perfectly reasonable outcome for a progressive condition that will continue throughout your life.”

More than 80 per cent of Dr Knudsen’s patients respond to regular medical treatment over a two-year period. And they are reinvigorated by the results, he says.

“The most common feedback I get when we’ve achieved improvement, it’s almost universal, is people saying, ‘I can’t believe how much it has improved my self-confidence. It has turned my life around’.”

Any surgical or invasive procedure carries risk. Before proceeding, you should seek a second opinion from an appropriately qualified health practitioner.

CONCERNED ABOUT HAIR LOSS?

CONTACT THE EXPERTS AT THE KNUDSEN CLINICS

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