

Good hair care advice

Introduction

This leaflet was developed by hair care professionals to provide you with standard hair care advice.

Good hair care

- Wash and condition your hair using your fingertips. Doing this avoids causing any damage that can result if the palms of the hands are used. Hair that is thinning or falling out is fragile and can be easily damaged.
- Avoid massaging the scalp when washing your hair as this can pull on the hair.
- Use a gentle shampoo as these only contain a few ingredients and are usually unperfumed. Some shampoos can strip moisture from your hair.
- It is good practice to use a conditioner every time you wash your hair. Conditioners protect the hair by coating the hair shaft, leaving a smoother surface. This reduces friction, which helps to avoid breakage, frizz and split ends. Leave-in conditioners can also be helpful.

Damaging actions

Traction

This is caused by any action that pulls or tugs at the hair which can cause permanent damage to the hair shaft.

- Hair styling - avoid wearing your hair tightly pulled back in a bun, ponytail, pigtails, cornrows, or braids. Frequently wearing a hairstyle that pulls on your hair can cause a type of hair loss called traction alopecia. In time, anything that pulls on your hair can cause permanent hair loss.
- Brushing - avoid bristle brushes and backcombing. It is especially important to be gentle with your hair when it is wet as the hair is more fragile at this time. Ideally, use your fingers or a wide toothed/detangling comb instead of a brush as it reduces the tugging effect and is much gentler on your hair. Handle your hair as little as possible and only enough to style it.

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Patient Information

- Hair habits – if you have a habit of twiddling your hair around your finger or pulling on it, try to stop. This also includes excessive handling and styling. These habits can weaken fragile hair and contribute to hair loss. If you are finding it difficult to stop a hair pulling habit, support from a clinical psychologist can be helpful. If you think you would benefit from the support of a clinical psychologist, please ask the clinician in clinic who will be able to make a referral on your behalf.

Heat

Heat can cause a lot of damage to your hair. It can weaken it and has a drying effect, making your hair prone to breakage.

- It is best to let your hair dry naturally. You can gently wrap your hair in a microfibre towel to help it dry more quickly.
- If you use a hairdryer, use the lowest heat and power setting to avoid weakening the hair.
- Use of hair straighteners or curling tongs exposes the hair to extreme heat. Try limiting the use of these to special occasions as the heat can weaken the hair.
- Sun exposure allows ultraviolet rays and heat to contribute to hair damage and also has a bleaching effect.
- Hot showers expose your hair to heat stress – reducing the water temperature can be helpful.
- Avoid hot oil treatments.

Lifestyle

- Avoid smoking. This causes inflammation throughout the body, which can worsen hair loss.
- Eat a healthy diet. A lack of certain vitamins or minerals, especially iron and protein, can contribute to hair loss. A blood test can confirm any deficiencies and will be requested by the clinician in clinic if they feel it is appropriate. Supplements designed for hair health can be beneficial; these can be bought over the counter at most pharmacies. Not eating enough calories during the day can also lead to hair loss.

Patient Information

Contact information

If you have any questions or would like more information please contact:

Dr Takwale's Secretary

Tel: 0300 422 5396

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 3:00pm

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>