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For men and women ...

New Ways  
to Fight  
**Hair  
Loss**

BY KAMALA THIAGARAJAN



scalp and by directly stimulating the hair roots. If you start minoxidil, you can't stop. When you stop, your genes will take over, and the minoxidil supported hair will soon start shedding."

Women seem to respond to minoxidil slightly better than men do; men appear to benefit most from the drug when they begin treatment in the early stages of hair loss. Though long-term side effects of the treatment are not known, short-term ones include a risk of dry, itchy scalp, even allergic reac-

roots to "sleep." This prevents hair follicles from dying out completely. Dr Rajput believes that hair can be made to grow again by re-activating such dormant roots. So he treats his patients with a particular combination of oral vitamins, antioxidants, calcium and aminoacids in regular cycles every three days for three to four months. There are no side effects, maintains Dr Rajput, in this "vitamin therapy" as he calls it and he claims it succeeded in several cases.

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## LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS OF MINOXIDIL ARE NOT KNOWN.



tions (rare). People with known or suspected coronary artery disease or heart failure are advised to avoid the drug in case it has internal effects. Minoxidil is also a pricey commitment—a 60ml bottle can cost up to Rs400, depending on its concentration. Never take it without your doctor's advice. Since hair loss resumes after you stop it, it's not seen as a permanent solution.

### Correcting Diet and Nutrients

Dr Rajesh Rajput, a hair restoration expert at the L.H. Hiranandani Hospital, Mumbai, will tell you that when the body senses an abnormal change, either in diet or lifestyle, the roots of the hair that are weaker start shedding. In some cases, the body's protective mechanism causes your hair

Shweta Sharan, 29, is a freelance writer from Chennai who experienced severe hair fall in her early 20s. "I had hardly any hair left on my head. It was embarrassing," she says. A visit to a trichologist—hair specialist—revealed that her poor diet was the underlying cause. As a college student, Shweta often went on crash diets, once losing as much as 19 kilos in three months.

Soon she was underweight, with a deficiency of iron and protein, two vital ingredients for healthy hair. "My dieting was unhealthy," she says. "I'd workout for about three hours a day and eat only Marie biscuits or brown bread. From being obese at 90 kilos, I became severely underweight." Shweta also had dandruff and a fungal infection on the scalp, which she blamed on a bad dye job.



Her doctor recommended that she correct her diet immediately and also asked her to wash her hair with a medicated shampoo every other day for a year. Shweta also took up yoga and used only wooden combs that were gentler on her hair. In a year, she went from virtual baldness, to a full head of hair.

## Scalp and Scalpel

In some cases the only alternative would be transplant surgery. Miriam Baptist, 51, who works at a Mumbai computer firm, has been juggling a demanding career and home for the past

thick and more permanent growth in the scalp and transplanted to the bald region. The surgeon makes tiny pores in the bald part of the head and the healthy hairs are delicately placed in the pores. During a single treatment session, hundreds or even thousands of individual hairs may be transplanted. After about four months, these hairs begin to grow normally.

Thanks to new techniques, hair transplants look more natural today than they did years ago. But transplants, however, almost never totally eliminate baldness. Like any surgical

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PROVEN TRACK RECORD AND DON'T BE AFRAID:

**CLARIFY ALL YOUR DOUBTS  
LONG BEFORE THE SURGERY.**



30 years. "I've worked long hours every day, never managing more than six hours of sleep," she says. "Finally the stress began to take its toll. I'd always had a thick head of hair but I noticed a bald patch above my forehead a few years ago." When the patch kept growing, Baptist tried out a few popular hair recovery centres but without results.

She finally decided on a follicular hair transplant in August 2007. Baptist was completely satisfied with the results. Her bald patch has disappeared.

During a follicular hair transplant, a naturally occurring follicular unit which may contain two or three hairs or hair-roots is pared from an area of

procedures, they may also leave residual scarring. Hair in the donor area may look too thin if too many transplants are taken from it. Some initial hair loss after the transplantation surgery isn't uncommon and is no cause for alarm.

Be sure to choose a surgeon with a proven track record and don't be afraid of clarifying all your doubts before the surgery. And postponing any potentially irreversible surgeries until balding patterns can be more accurately predicted might be the best approach. And be cautious! Says a patient who was left with a visible scar from a previous transplant, "The question to ask before any surgical