

# LOSING YOUR *crowning* GLORY



For women, it's hard to imagine a more soul-crushing event than hair loss, not a few wayward strands in the sink in the morning but ongoing, physiologically induced hair loss culminating in noticeable patchiness or even baldness. Kimberly Hughes sheds light on the effects of alopecia, with expert advice on how to remedy the problem.

**B**roadly termed as alopecia and far more common than you might think—though frequently underreported owing to embarrassment and stigma—female hair loss has many potential triggers.

“Everything from rapid weight loss, major stress—mental and physical—to getting older and menopause, coming off the birth control pill, genetics, an unhealthy scalp, immune system and hormones can cause hair loss,” explains Dr. Benjamin Barankin, MD, FRCPC, FAAD dermatologist and medical director and founder of the Toronto Dermatology Centre.

Though it may seem counterintuitive,

female pattern baldness is considered a skin condition, adds Dr. Jaggi Rao, MD, FRCPC, clinical professor of medicine and director of the Dermatology Residency Program at the University of Alberta. “The way to think about hair loss in general is scarring and non-scarring,” Dr. Rao offers from Edmonton.

“Scarring includes conditions like fungal diseases and inflammatory conditions like lupus or lichen planus. These will cause your scalp to scar, resulting in permanent hair loss over time. Non-scarring hair loss is the most common type and there are a few major sub-types: androgenetic ▶

## WIGS ARE AN EASY WAY

to conceal hair loss, but often are quite costly. If you haven't worn one since raiding Mom's closet playing dress-up, you'll be happy to learn that technology has kept apace for more economical options. Designed by celeb stylist Tabatha Coffey, the LUXHAIR line of wigs ([luxhair.com](http://luxhair.com)), add-ons and extensions are insanely lightweight yet they mimic human hair's denier or strand thickness, which varies with ethnicity. What's more, these wigs—which range from US\$69 to just under US\$200 can last up to a year—and can be styled like normal hair. “In fact they're more predictable than human hair,” offers Cleve McMillan, LUXHAIR's director of education. “So you really can create something that looks natural every time.”

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## ELEVATE GUIDE

alopecia, which is male and female pattern hair loss, and it's by far the most common. After that is alopecia areata, where you get round bald spots; that happens when the immune system attacks the hair follicles.

"The other big one is telogen effluvium, and that happens when there is stress on the body, such as pregnancy. Finally we have anagen effluvium, and that's when you lose your hair during the growth phase, so during chemotherapy or radiation therapy."

Despite that troubling grocery list, there's good news: hair loss is treatable and there are many medical solutions available.

## GET DIAGNOSED

As with any physiological disorder, the most important first step is to know precisely what you're dealing with. "If you are experiencing hair loss, you need to get a correct diagnosis. I'm not talking about going to your hairdresser," Dr. Rao says.

"You need to see a physician; possibly be referred to a dermatologist who would be able to determine exactly what type of hair loss it is and how best to treat it. With that diagnosis, you can try and stop the trigger factors while reversing the effects that process has created."

Enough said.

**"OUR CLINIC'S MISSION IS TO PROVIDE OUR CLIENTS WITH REAL SOLUTIONS TO THEIR HAIR AND SCALP ISSUES AND OFFER THEM A RENEWED SENSE OF WELLNESS AND SELF-ESTEEM ..."**

— AMALIA RUGGIERO,  
President and trichologist, Capilia Truly You Hair Loss Solution Centre

## SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Help is there if you need it. Amalia Ruggiero, president and trichologist at Capilia Truly You Hair Loss Solution Centre in Mississauga, Ont., has been tallying success stories for nearly two decades, offering a highly customized mix of consultation, scalp therapy, wigs and, crucially, ongoing support.

"Our clinic's mission is to provide our clients with real solutions to their hair and scalp issues and offer them a renewed sense of wellness and self-esteem," says Ruggiero.

"We do this by understanding their needs and providing unique and tailor-made programs for each individual," adding that they "serve approximately 3,000 men, women and children" in a typical year. "The majority of women coming through our centre

experience hormonal and genetic hair loss," she adds.

Similar help—served with a heaping of commiseration—is also on offer at True Hair Replacement and Cosmetics Centre Inc. in Willowdale Ont.. "Honestly, nowadays you don't have to go through this. There are so many options out there. And it makes a life of a difference. I know because I am also a client," laughs Rosanna Jardim, a hair technician with True Hair, where treatments begin at about \$800. "A few of the girls here have gone through hair loss for a variety of reasons. We do everything with heart because we've been there."

## EXPLORE TREATMENT OPTIONS

If the key, as Dr. Rao suggested, is preventing further hair loss while promoting hair gain, you might want to start from the inside out. New Nordic, a Scandinavian-made line of natural supplements, offers a nifty little pill called Hair Volume (\$27.95 for 30 tablets, [newnordicshop.ca](http://newnordicshop.ca)), which, when taken daily promises to nourish and strengthen hair.

"It's really a combination product so it can help on many different levels," says Jan Petersen, general manager of New Nordic Inc.. "Plus studies have shown that Biotin, a key ingredient in the supplement, helps to strengthen hair. Once you deliver that back to the system, hair regrows."

That's a strategy Dr. Barankin supports, adding that folks might want to also use a lotion, such as Neoptide (available over-the-counter at select pharmacies), that "increases blood supply to the hair follicle.

"Also, keep stress to a minimum and your weight stable," Dr. Barankin says. "Rogaine five per cent foam by prescription and Aldactone and/or birth control pills by prescription are the heavy hitters as far as medications and treatments. There are lasers now approved for hair loss, but their efficacy is modest, and scientific data about them is still lacking."

However, Dr. Rao has witnessed promising results with illumiWave Laser Hair Rejuvenation. "I am very impressed with the illumiWave180 in both medical and cosmetic applications," he offers. But this treatment is a long-term commitment: "People typically come in twice a week for about a year, spending half an hour under this red light. It's about \$2,500 for a year's worth of treatment," he says.

Whatever tactic you employ to combat hair loss and promote hair growth, Dr. Barankin insists that patience is essential. "It can take six or more months to stop hair loss and to regrow hair," he cautions. "Everyone wants a quick fix but there isn't one where hair is concerned." ☺