

Jennifer Allyn
(847) 240-1730
jallyn@aad.org

Scott Carl
(847) 240-1701
scarl@aad.org

Allison Sit
(847) 240-1746
asit@aad.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF CARING FOR YOUR HAIR AT ANY AGE
Dermatologist Offers Top Tips for Maintaining a Lifetime of Healthy Hair

NEW YORK (Nov. 8, 2007) – For most people, and especially women, hair is their crowning glory that defines a significant part of their appearance and personal style. Yet, despite its delicate composition, hair is routinely subjected to significant damage from styling products, hair dyes, straightening or waving procedures and even sun exposure. Over time, hair that was once radiant can look brittle, frizzy and lackluster.

In recognition of National Healthy Skin Month, dermatologist Zoe D. Draelos, MD, FAAD, from High Point, N.C., spoke today at the American Academy of Dermatology's (Academy)  academy on the most common causes of hair damage, including how to prevent it and ways to maintain healthy hair as we age.

"It's important to understand that hair is nonliving and cannot be repaired once it is injured," said Dr. Draelos. "As we get older, hair growth slows down and the cosmetic beauty of our hair decreases. Hair loss that occurs from continual hair breakage over the years is a serious cosmetic concern for many women, so the key is to prevent this damage by stopping the cycle of over-processing and over-grooming our hair and selecting hair care products with proven hair-health benefits."

In Our 20s

While age-wise our hair should be at its healthiest in our 20s, Dr. Draelos noted that some young women fall prey to yo-yo dieting or fad diets at this age –

- more -

which can wreak havoc on hair. For hair to be healthy, it needs nourishment in the form of protein, vitamins and minerals from the foods we eat.

“Hair is a sign of our general overall health,” said Dr. Draelos. “When a person has an eating disorder or is omitting certain foods from her diet – such as meat – this can adversely affect the health and appearance of the hair. Hair that is not getting enough nutrition from the foods we eat doesn’t grow well and it won’t have that radiant, healthy glow.”

Since meat is an excellent source of protein, which is important for hair health, vegetarians need to be sure to supplement their diet with other complete, or whole, sources of protein. Complete proteins are those that contain all of the essential amino acids for the dietary needs of humans. Dr. Draelos advised vegetarians to consume milk products, such as cheese, milk or yogurt, for complete proteins. She also cautioned that some proteins in vegetables are not complete sources of protein and taking multivitamins will not help make up for a lack of dietary protein, as they do not contain protein.

Another hair concern for women in their 20s, and 30s, is what happens to their hair when they stop taking birth control pills. Dr. Draelos explained that when estrogen levels fall during this process, hair will fall out.

“Sometimes when a woman notices her hair is falling out, she might not link it to a certain event, such as stopping oral contraceptives, since hair typically doesn’t shed for about three months after an occurrence that is happening inside the body,” added Dr. Draelos. “I tell my patients that our hair is like looking at tree rings – it’s an indication of what’s happened in the past.”

In Our 30s

For women in their 30s, pregnancy is a common life event that can affect hair health. During pregnancy, all of the hair follicles on the scalp are usually signaled to grow – resulting in luxurious, radiant-looking hair. However, in the six months following delivery, hair sheds.

“Many times, some of the hair that is shed post-pregnancy may eventually re-grow,” said Dr. Draelos. “However, in women who have female-pattern hair

loss, the hair may not re-grow. Those women who have an inherited tendency towards female-pattern hair loss should seek dermatologic help at that point.”

In Our 40s

Although hair dyes are popular for women of all ages, women in their 40s may be more likely to turn to hair color as a way to camouflage gray hair that typically starts to appear at this age. Dr. Draelos explained that gray hair occurs when the pigment cells in the body stop producing pigments, which is a sign that the body’s ability to produce pigment is decreasing.

“Once the hair has been chemically dyed, it strips the protective lipid layer of the hair shaft and opens up holes in the hair shaft, allowing the dye to enter and create a new color,” said Dr. Draelos. “Hair dyeing is damaging no matter what color or what kind of hair dye you use, but lightening your hair color more than three shades requires higher volumes of peroxide – which in turn creates more holes in the hair shaft and causes more damage. So, the best thing a woman can do if she wants to cover her gray hair is to stay ‘on shade’ – or to dye her hair within three color shades of her natural color. Typically, dyeing hair darker is better than dyeing it lighter.”

In addition, women in their 40s usually enter the perimenopause period. As estrogen levels start to fall, women may notice more hair thinning, that their hair doesn’t grow as quickly, and the hair shaft starts to thin slightly in diameter. Dr. Draelos noted that women who are having trouble with hair growth during perimenopause should see their dermatologist for treatment.

In Our 50s and Beyond

Once a woman reaches her 50s, she will notice that hair growth naturally slows down. Since the diameter of the hair shaft continues to thin, Dr. Draelos advises women to shorten the amount of time they leave on styling products – such as hair dyes or permanent wave solutions – because thinner hair shafts require less time to process.

Dr. Draelos recommended that older women use a good conditioner, as some protein-containing conditioners can replace lost protein and increase hair

strength by as much as 10 percent. She also advised women to handle their hair as little as possible, including avoiding over-brushing hair.

“A lot of older women tend to use a lot of hairspray to make their hair appear fuller, and some of the new flexible hairsprays will move with the hair better,” said Dr. Draelos. “So, when you sleep on the hair, you don’t break the hair shaft because the hairspray has made it so brittle.”

Dr. Draelos added that women of all ages can benefit from some of the newer hair care products, as well as following a few basic hair care tips. These include:

- Make sure you wash your scalp, not just your hair. Washing only your hair strips the sebum, or oil, from the hair and creates fly-away hair that is dull and coarse.
- Washing your hair every day is not necessary, particularly as you get older. Dr. Draelos added that how often you shampoo your hair depends on how much sebum your hair makes naturally.
- As you get older, you also can shampoo your hair too infrequently, which can lead to scalp disease or dandruff. Women of color also should avoid shampooing the hair too infrequently, which makes them prone to these conditions.
- “2-in-1” shampoos that remove oil from the scalp, clean the hair, then condition the hair in the rinse phase are good choices for damaged or chemically-treated hair.
- New silicone technology has revolutionized hair conditioning – smoothing the cuticle, temporarily mending split ends, decreasing combing friction, improving the ability of hair to retain color and decreasing hair breakage.
- Some newer hairsprays contain sunscreen, which Dr. Draelos noted prevent protein breakdown due to sun exposure and also prevent hair dye from fading.
- Some of the after-dye conditioners included in hair dye kits now contain sunscreen, which also prevents the hair dye from fading.

- Since hair dyes remove the lipid layer of fat that protects the hair, the newest after-dye conditioners are effectively replacing this protective layer, as are some conditioners specially formulated for color-treated hair.

“Safeguarding your hair from unnecessary chemical damage is a worthwhile investment, as the result will be hair that maintains its texture and radiance over the long term,” said Dr. Draelos. “Any concerns about the health of your hair or unexplained hair loss should be addressed with a dermatologist.”

Headquartered in Schaumburg, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy), founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 15,000 physicians worldwide, the Academy is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the Academy at 1-888-462-DERM (3376) or www.aad.org.

#