

What to do now: **five tips** to give your hair a fighting chance in the battle against hair loss

1 Don't wait. Unlike a fine wine, hair loss won't get better with time. Taking action at the first signs of thinning may increase your chances of regenerating growth. "After the roots are destroyed, there is nothing that can be done to bring the destroyed follicles back," says Taylor.

2 Leave it to the experts. "Black hair is more delicate than people realize," says Barry L. Fletcher, stylist, trichologist and author of *Why Are Black Women Losing Their Hair?* (Unity Publishers). Often the best way to nourish hair is to enlist the help of a qualified professional. At the first sign of thinning, visit your dermatologist to diagnose the problem. Also consider a trichologist (hair and scalp expert). Misuse of chemicals, relaxers and color can cause hair loss, so ditch the do-it-yourself mentality and go to a stylist who's well versed in hair and scalp care.

3 Style wisely. Taut hairstyles like braids, weaves, extensions, cornrows and even rollers can pull on the hairline and cause the hair to fall out. "The less you do in general, the better your hair is going to be," contends dermatologist Rosemarie Ingleton of New York City. Also avoid applying direct heat to hair. Air-dry, wrap or roller-set hair as much as possible.

4 Develop a home-care regimen. You are born with all the hair follicles you will ever have. "So take time to nurture your hair," says New York City hair guru Sabina Francis, who treats hair-loss clients using an all-natural preparation, direct from her St. Lucian grandmother, with ingredients that include nettle, sage and castor oil. As far as shampooing goes, you may need to cleanse your hair more than once a week if you're physically active or perspire heavily, says George Buckner of New York City's Hair Fashions East, who prescribes a personalized hair-loss regimen after scrutinizing the client's scalp under a microscope. After shampooing, condition hair with an ultrahydrating formula (try Nioxin Intensive Therapy Hydrating Hair Masque) and strengthen hair with a protein conditioner monthly (try Warren Tricomi PureStrength Strengtheners for All Hair Types).

5 Live well. Taking care of your body is the first step in taking care of your hair. "Enhancing a healthy diet may be the newest approach to treating hair loss," says Ingleton. Try supplementing with B vitamins, including biotin, and ask your doctor about your correct daily dosage. "We need both biotin and protein because they are part of the natural manufacturing process of hair and nails," says Ingleton. "Eat wholesome carbohydrates like whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables," says Baltimore trichologist Angela Jones. "For people who are prone to alopecia areata, decreasing stress is one way to keep it from getting worse," says Victoria Holloway, M.D., director of the L'Oréal Institute for Ethnic Hair and Skin Research in Chicago.

Your Hair-Loss Resource Guide

INFORMATIONAL WEB SITES

- Aad.org (American Academy of Dermatology): Access general information about hair loss.
- Ahlc.org (American Hair Loss Council): The not-for-profit agency's site gives impartial information on treatments and helps browsers find a local expert.
- Brownskin.net: Dermatologist Susan Taylor's educational site for women of color has information on keeping hair, skin and nails in optimal condition.
- Hairlosstalk.com: Learn about the latest in research and treatments, search product reviews, or join an online discussion.
- Womenscenterforhairloss.com: The organization's site provides the latest information as well as restoration options.

BOOKS

- *The Black Woman's Guide to Beautiful Healthier Hair in 6 Weeks!* (Life Changing Publications, LLC) by Carolyn Gray
- *Brown Skin: Dr. Susan Taylor's Prescription for Flawless Skin, Hair and Nails* (Amistad) by Susan C. Taylor
- *The Hair Bible: A Complete Guide to Health and Care* (Aurum Press) by Philip Kingsley

- *Why Are Black Women Losing Their Hair? The First Complete Guide to Healthy Hair* (Unity Publishers) by Barry L. Fletcher
- *Healthy Black Hair: Step-by-Step Instructions for Growing Longer, Stronger Hair* (Panacea Pub) by Nicole Elizabeth Smith
- *Ultra Black Hair Growth II 2000 Edition* (UBH Pubns) by Cathy Howse

SCALP SPECIALISTS

- Angela Jones, Vidae International Health and Wellness Center, Baltimore, (410) 602-6242
- June Armstead, Body, Soul and Spirit Salon—A Trichology Clinic, San Francisco, (415) 333-7261
- Philip Kingsley, Philip Kingsley Trichological Centre, New York City, (212) 753-9600; London, 0207 629 4004
- Rodney Barnett, Dallas, (214) 904-0330, rodneybarnett.com
- Sabina Anibas, Aurbeautica Hair Salon, New York City, (917) 837-5379
- Tariq Madyun, International Institute of Trichology, Madison, Alabama, (256) 461-4264 ▷