

GOOD LOOKS

By Jennifer Freihofer

How to Use Your Head

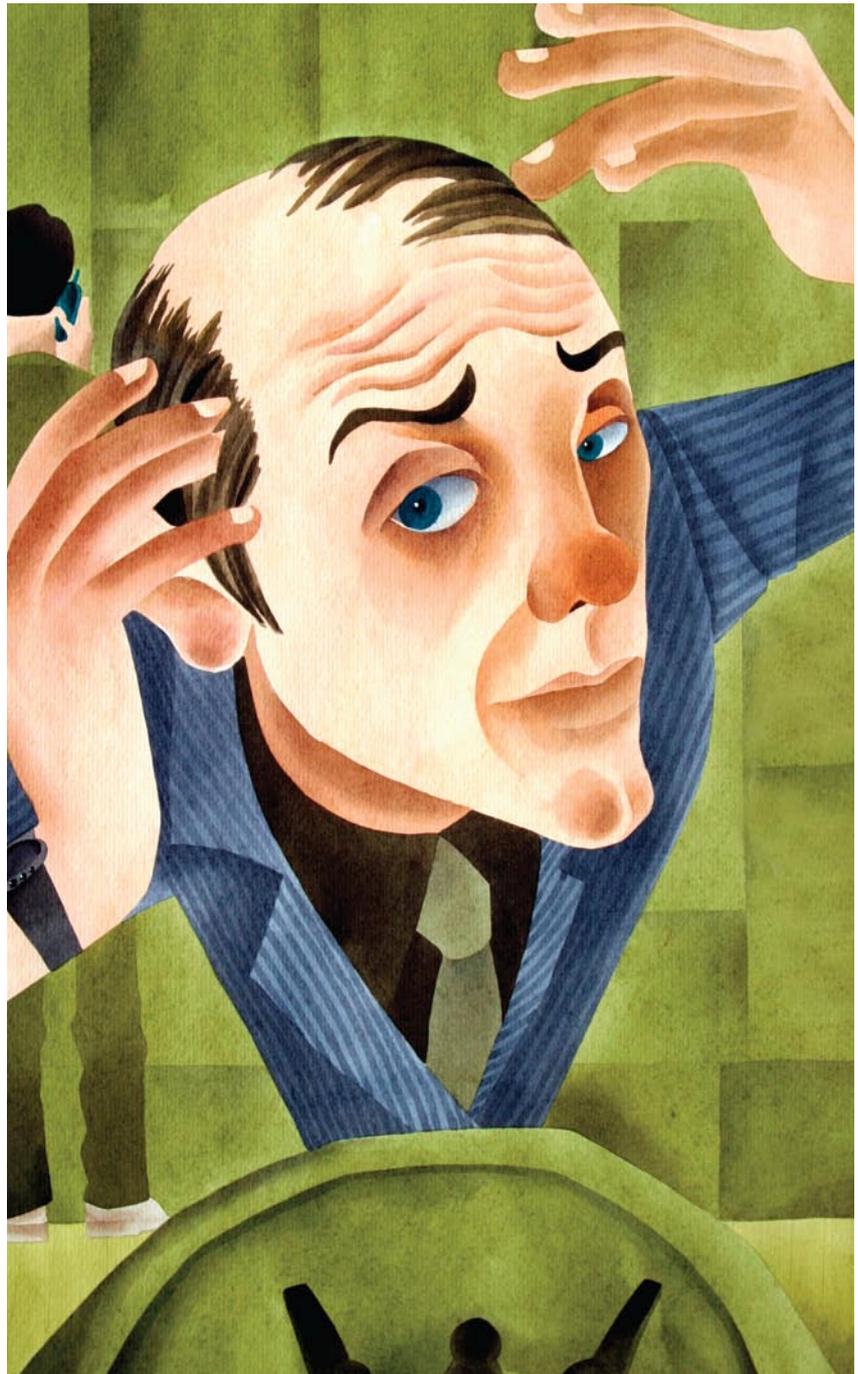
... WHEN YOUR HAIR STARTS FALLING OUT.

HERE ON THE GULFSHORE, we know it's smart to wear sunscreen to protect our skin and sunglasses to save our eyes from the blazing sun. When our hair starts to thin, those items become doubly useful: a little SPF for the extra skin that didn't used to see so much sunlight, or shades to shield us from the glare of a shiny topper.

All bald jokes aside, hair loss can be a serious downer, and the stereotypes of bad toupees and obvious plugs may be even more disheartening. But in an age when nearly everything can be implanted, nipped and tucked to an imperceptible degree, why would hair be any different? We tracked down the latest in state-of-the-art procedures and remedies to keep your locks looking lush, no matter your age.

THE OPTIONS

The fancy term for it is alopecia, but what it really means is you're losing hair faster than you'd like. A little bit of fallout on a daily basis is normal, but by the time patients notice hair loss on their own heads, they've already lost 50 percent of their hair density, says Dr. Anurag Agarwal, a double board certified facial plastic surgeon at The Hair Transplant Center of Naples. And while there's not much you can



do in the way of early preventive treatment, there are medical and surgical options to help preserve and supplement what you have, as well as encourage new growth.

A big factor in determining the proper treatment is age, Agarwal says. If, for example, his patient is a young man just starting to lose his hair, his initial recommendation would likely be for Propecia, a once-a-day pill, or topical minoxidil, otherwise known as Rogaine.

“I always start a younger person on Propecia because it helps a patient retain hair as well as potentially grow some new hair,” he says, “and the more of your own hair that you can keep, the better off you are.” In a best-case scenario, it may cause enough of an improvement that a surgical treatment becomes unnecessary.

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Propecia can only be used by men, but women are still candidates for Rogaine. It is slightly labor intensive, Agarwal notes, because it has to be used daily, but it has been shown to cause new hair growth in some patients, making it well worth the few extra minutes a day.

THE NEXT STEP

If medication doesn't cut it, hair transplantation is a common and surprisingly speedy surgical solution. A quick rundown: The scalp

is numbed with a local anesthetic, and a graft is taken from the lower back portion of the head, called the donor site. The surgeon creates microscopic openings in the balding part of the scalp and then places the individual hair follicles in the openings. The entire process takes only five to six hours, and the patient can go home immediately after.

And to answer the big question—does it hurt? “Completely painless,” assures Gary Goodelle, 61, who has had three hair transplantation procedures in the last three years. “It was more painful to look in the mirror every day and see [bald spots] than I knew it would be to have the procedure done.”

In fact, he says, during his latest procedure, he brought his iPod with him and listened to his favorite music the whole time.

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For lunch, the surgeon and nurses ordered Goodelle his favorite pizza—anchovies, pepperoni and mushrooms—which they snacked on while chatting.

The experience was equally breezy for 72-year-old Patricia Cunningham, who noticed her hair was getting thinner on the top front part of her head—a common spot among women—over the past 10 years before having her hair grafted in January. Though she had been advised it would take close to nine months for the new hairs to start growing, she was happy to report that she went to get her hair done for the first time, sans wig, at only five months out.

THE LATEST

In the last 10 years, this state-of-the-art method, officially called follicular unit transplantation, has

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replaced the now obsolete punch grafts, which gave the unnatural appearance of several clusters of hair with gaps in between. Now, single hairs are placed individually at angles that mirror the original direction of growth. Surgeons even take into account the contrast between a patient’s hair and skin color and the thickness of each strand, which can affect how natural the transplants look when the new hair starts to grow in. Because

the process is completely customized, one session typically runs from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

“It’s time-consuming, but the benefit is it’s much less detectable,” says Agarwal. “I think the fear that people have had in the past is the artificial nature of what a hair transplant looks like, but that’s no longer the case.”

Goodelle is a walking confirmation of that. His hair, he says, looks just like it did when he was younger. “This is my philosophy: If you’re going to spend a lot of money buying clothes, getting in shape and doing things to make yourself presentable, why in the world would you want to walk around with patches of hair missing?” He pauses, adding, “And if you have a wife or girlfriend, I think they’d just as soon see you looking good, too.” †



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