

Take care of your hair

THREETY IRANI

ONE OF YOUR MOST BEAUTIFUL features is your hair. A good head of hair, healthy and full of bounce and shine, attracts attention at once and it can be one of your greatest assets. Before puberty, the hair of both boys and girls is very similar in structure and there is little difference in its quality. But as a girl enters her teens and the female hormone, oestrogen, starts to be produced by the ovaries, her hair increases in thickness and luxuriance and from now on the quality of her hair is far superior to that of the boy.

Hair is at its best during adolescence and this is the time you should make the most of it. Very often during pregnancy you will notice that your hair has regained the gloss and shine it had during the teens, the reason being that oestrogen levels are raised at this time and the hair bounces back to its earlier lustre. Because of the oestrogen in a woman's system she will seldom go bald - if a woman does lose her hair, it is an indication of some nutritional or emotional disorder or a major health problem. But balding in a man does not mean any of these things - it has no implications regarding his general health.

Although most people have roughly the same number of hairs, the thickness varies greatly and this is because of the structure of each individual hair - how thick or thin it is. Each hair on your head is made up mostly of protein. Under your scalp is the hair follicle, which is a little sac inside the skin. At the base of this is the papilla from where cells divide and push up and form each hair shaft. These shafts have got an outer and inner layer. The former is known as the cuticle and is made up of a number of elongated cells which lie flat, slightly overlapping each other. This top surface gives the hair its sheen and reflects the light. **It can be easily damaged by dyeing, too much shampooing and excessive blow-drying. Hair abuse, as these are called, also includes perming, straightening and bleaching.** All these strip the cuticle or outer covering of its sheen by denuding it of the oil or waxy substance that forms a layer over it. This oil is what is secreted by the sebaceous glands, found attached to the hair follicle.

If you are in good health, have a well-balanced and nutritious diet and are relaxed and stress-free, these glands produce enough oil to keep the hair in a healthy condition. It is only when the mechanism gets upset for one reason or another that the secretion of oil increases due to tension and stress and the hair gets over-oily. Then, in order to stop this, people tend to overwash their hair and this leads to the drying of the shafts and a vicious circle starts.

Under the top layer of cuticle is found the medulla. This is made up of a number of cells and contains the pigment or colour-giving cells of the hair. If you look closely at a head of hair, you will find it is not one flat colour but one made up of several shades.

There is a strong relationship between the colour of your hair and your ethnic group. For instance, Chinese or Southeast Asians have very straight black hair while the African races have curly thick black hair. Hair varies greatly on each individual head. Some women find they can grow their hair really long while others cannot. This is due to the fact that the individual hair life tends to vary in every human being.

If you are born with a hair life which is short, it will never reach down below your waist. But this does not mean that a woman with a long hair life can neglect herself and yet expect to have long luxurious tresses. If your diet is neglected or you are run down in health, both the hair and follicle life can be reduced. Shock, anxiety, poor nutrition and bad health all lead to hair loss.

One of the best ways to improve hair health is by improving your diet. Cut down on animal fats, as much as possible. Apart from trimming of any extra fat you can see, cut out on red meats such as mutton, beef and pork, as these contain fats which you may not be able to remove. Cut down on butter and any saturated fat. Use plant oil in your cooking, have fresh nuts and plenty of fruits containing the B vitamins. Try to have liver once a week and at least three eggs per week if the state of your cholesterol permits!

Reduce the amount of shampooing you do. If hair is dry, twice a week is enough. Do not overdo the blow-drying. If you find your ends are splitting, get yourself a hairstyle that is easy to look after and let it dry naturally after a shampoo. The less you play around with your hair the better. Give it a hot oil treatment once a week – apply the oil on the scalp with a piece of cotton, then gently massage it in and apply towels rinsed out in hot water on the head, continuing the process for about 15 minutes. Then shampoo your hair, let it dry naturally and see the difference it makes.

If you carry out these simple instructions of eating well and treating your hair as gently as possible, you are certain to have a good head of hair as long as you live.

[Courtesy: The Statesman]

Why some youth tend to go astray?

MOHINDER SINGH*

** Hony. Gen. Secretary, Guru Nanak Education Society, PO Box 13, Gandhidham. 370201. Gujarat.*

ONE OF MY CLASS FELLOW WHO retired from high position in government gave me a surprise, when I received his phone call. Hence a meeting took place, I was happy to see him with flowing white beard but was dismayed to see his son and grandson clean shaven. He told me that his son was a College Professor and Grandson pursuing Degree in Engineering. They both are handsome.

After a month or so I purposely went to his place and put the question as to why your son and grandson are not practicing Sikhs. My friend told frankly that He and his wife could not take care to educate their son to follow the tenets of Sikhism. We did not have literature on Sikhism at home, nor we were regular to go to Gurdwara except on special occasions. I was carrying on my family tradition where as we did not bother to see that our son needed direction and instruction to carry on the tradition and know the tenets of Sikhism to follow. Result being that when my son married he discarded hair to which also our protest was not effective. We tried to pursue our son through his wife but of no avail. This was not the end and my son could not help keeping his son, as Keshadhari.

There are numerous such cases in Punjab where due to ignorance and carelessness of the elders their children go astray and become clean shaved. The elders fail in their duty to educate their children about Sikhism and ensure that they

became practicing Sikhs for which their parents lacked to create Dharmic atmosphere at home.

Often the siblings are blamed for not following Sikh religion but actually the failure lies with the mother, who neither bothers to impart teaching of Sikhism to her children, nor practices herself. Result being that when children grow they become easy prey to trimming and shaving. The mother is the first teacher of the child. Whatever the mother teaches her children definitely has an effect on the future life of their child. The mother should be role model for the children. Suppose if the mother trims her eyebrow and father trims his beard this practice will definitely have an effect on young minds - when they will grow up, they imitate their mother and father.

The parents must feel their responsibility to impart teaching of Sikhism to their children and to create Dharmic atmosphere at home. Then only this trend can be reversed.

