

Hair Loss During Midlife

This is very common. 40% of women can have thinning hair. You can lose 50% before you would notice. There are several causes.

1. Fluctuating levels of testosterone and estrogen. Estrogen and progesterone help hair grow faster and stay longer. As estrogen levels drop, testosterone levels may rise, causing certain hair follicles to fail. Increased testosterone also accounts for increased facial hair and rogue chin hair.
2. Genetic predisposition from either parent.
3. Stress, made worse by some of the mood changes women experience at this time. Exercising and doing relaxing things may help.
4. Hypothyroidism, diabetes, lupus.
5. Nutritional deficiencies such as lack of iron, some crash diets, illness.
6. Medications. 290 drugs have hair loss as a side effect! Medications cause two types of hair loss. The first is Telogen Effluvium (most common), which appears 2-4 months after starting a medication. It causes the hair to go into resting phase and fall out early, losing 100-150 hair/day. The second is Anagen Effluvium. It causes loss when the hair is actively growing, **preventing the division of matrix cells that produce hair**. This happens a few days to a few weeks after starting this medication. This affects all body hair. An example of this would be certain types of chemotherapy. The major drug groups that cause loss are:
 - Vitamin A – ie. retinoids
 - Some antibiotics, antifungal drugs
 - Some antidepressants
 - Birth control pills
 - Anticoagulants
 - Cholesterol lowering drug
 - Drugs that suppress the immune system
 - Some types of chemotherapy
 - Blood pressure medications like ACE Inhibitors and beta blockers
 - Hormone replacement therapy

- Mood stabilizers
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Parkinson's drugs
- Steroids
- Thyroid medication
- Weight loss drugs

What to do

1. If you notice this happening, discuss it with your doctor so appropriate testing for things like hypothyroidism or anemia can be done.
2. Reduce your stress
3. Eat a well balanced diet that consists of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, healthy oils like olive oil, avocado oil, camelina. Green Tea can be helpful because of the antioxidant properties. Make sure you get enough iron containing foods and get essential fatty acids from salmon, tuna, flaxseed oil, walnuts and almonds.
4. Keep well hydrated
5. Treat your hair well by avoiding chemicals, dyes, perms, straightening iron

Fortunately, we usually recover well once the cause has been determined and **treated**. Medications are available to promote recovery such as topical Minoxidil. Hair loss such as the male pattern baldness type may respond to Spironolactone or OCP containing Drospirenone.