FEED YOUR HAIR BACK TO LIFE
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Hair loss and hair damage are huge worries to a lot of people. Whether fretting about going bald or staring in horror at a frizzy head of hair before work, our hair can be a source of serious exasperation.

Along with our skin, it is one of the most exposed parts of the body. This makes it especially prone to damage and external forces such as the sun. This is a problem, since a lot of us take pride in our hair, getting it styled until it is just right. The thing is, the health of it is just as important as its appearance.

It is important to protect it, both from external and internal factors, in order to keep it looking full, silky and healthy. Failure to do so can result in hair loss, split ends, slow growth and even changing colors. While some of these issues cannot be prevented, such as our hair going grey as we age, the majority can be seen to.

How?

The answer lies in the food that we eat. With a few minor changes in our diets, such as eating more of certain foods and less of others, we can keep our hair looking luxurious, shiny and beautiful, no matter how old we are.

The right diet can protect your hair from the weather, stress, low circulation, nutrient deficiency and other underlying causes. If you want to maintain the best head of hair you can, you’ve come to the right place.
Taking care of your hair starts with your diet, and there are several foods that you need to incorporate into your diet to promote healthy hair. Here are ten that will leave you with a fuller, healthier head of hair in no time.

**Eggs**

These are not usually associated with improving hair health, but the fact is that a good portion of eggs can go a long way. They actually contain a large amount of protein, which is one of the main components of human hair. They're also fantastic sources of sulfur, iron, selenium and zinc - minerals that all play a part in promoting hair health. Iron increases circulation to your scalp, for example, while zinc strengthens the hair you already have.

**Blueberries**

The term 'superfood' is thrown around a lot these days, with not all foods being deserving of the label. However, the same cannot be said for these juicy, tasty berries. They have an impressive level of antioxidants, that help protect the scalp from those dreaded free radicals, and frankly incredible amounts of vitamin C in each serving which helps to boost collagen production and stimulate circulation in the scalp. These are a great addition to any diet and can easily be added. Put them in yogurt or oats, or cook them into pancakes; they can add flavor to almost any dish.

**Salmon**

Known as one of the best sources of the amazingly healthy omega-3 fatty acids, salmon is another great food for your hair. These fatty acids play a huge part in hair health, and since the body can’t produce them, it is essential to get them from your diet. They make up 2-3% of your hair as well. Along with their anti-inflammatory properties, Omega-3 also plays a part in keeping your skin supple and hydrated, and salmon is a good source of selenium, which protects the skin from sun exposure.
Spinach
This leafy green vegetable is packed with a ton of nutrients and antioxidants that are not only great for the body, but your hair as well. It contains vitamins B, C and E, along with potassium, calcium, iron, magnesium and Omega 3 — all of which are required for a healthy and full head of hair. Iron in particular aids the red blood cells in carrying oxygen to the hair follicles to promote healthy hair growth. Swap the lettuce in your salads and sandwiches for spinach to start seeing fast results.

Oysters
These delicious morsels are a great source of zinc, the mineral that aids in skin renewal and repair in the body. It not only helps keep your hair healthy, it also has the same effect on your nails and eyes. Deficiencies of zinc have been shown to lead to hair loss, and since oysters can provide nearly 500% of your daily requirements, eating these will mean that you won't be losing your hair any time soon.

Lentils
Hair is made up of hardened keratin, a form of protein, so it is vital to have a good amount of it in your diet. Luckily, much like eggs, lentils are an excellent dietary source of protein, and can help promote hair growth and health, as well as strengthen individual hair strands. They're also a great source of iron, which can increase metabolism, circulation and oxygenation of cells when combines with vitamin C, making it essential for hair growth.

Sweet Potatoes
Yet another superfood that is well-deserving of the title, sweet potatoes are an excellent addition to anyone’s diet. They're packed full of the nutrient called beta-carotene, which is converted by the body into vitamin A. Since a deficiency of vitamin A can lead to dry skin and scalp, this is an important mineral to have plenty of. Beta-carotene has also been shown to have anti-aging properties.
Greek Yogurt
Creamy, delicious, and actually exceptionally good for you, it is always a good idea (and a treat) to incorporate some Greek yogurt into your diet. It is especially high in protein, has less calories than regular yogurt, and is packed with vitamin B5 and D, both of which have been linked to hair follicle health. You can mix it with the aforementioned blueberries to double the hair-strengthening benefits.

Walnuts
Smooother skin, brighter eyes, strong bones, and most importantly, healthy hair. These can all be achieved by just having a handful of these awesomely tasty nuts a day. They are an excellent source of biotin, which helps strengthen hair, reduce hair loss and improve hair growth, as well as a great source of vitamin E. Deficiency of vitamin E has been shown to lead to brittle hair, so it is important to have it incorporated into your diet. You can have them on their own as a snack, or throw them into your bowl of yogurt with blueberries.

Chicken
This is another excellent source of protein, and it’s tasty too! As little as four ounces of chicken can contain 35 grams of protein, a big part of your recommended daily intake. Good amounts of high-quality protein in a diet can prevent brittle hair and even prevent hair color loss. Protein can also increase the bioavailability of iron, which promotes healthy hair growth.
Here are some easy recipes for you to follow to help you on your way to having a fuller and more luxurious head of hair.

**Antioxidant Muffins**

Makes 6-8 muffins

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/3 cup pecans, chopped
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1/4 cup almond milk
- 1 large egg

**Directions**

- Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C, gas 4).
- Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, pecans, and salt. In a separate bowl, lightly beat egg and almond milk. Combine dry and wet ingredients.
- Pour batter into paper muffin cups. Bake for 30-40 minutes, then transfer muffins to a cooling rack. Serve warm.
Curried Sweet Potato Soup

6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, smashed
- 2 tsp curry powder
- 1 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes (pink, orange, or yellow variety), peeled and chopped
- 1/2 inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- 3 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- Chopped parsley, for garnish

Directions

- Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add garlic and curry powder, and cook about 30 seconds, stirring constantly.
- Add sweet potatoes, onion, ginger, and broth, and bring to boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until sweet potatoes are easily pierced with a fork (about 20 to 25 minutes).
- Working in batches, purée soup in a blender or use an immersible hand blender to blend soup until smooth. Top with chopped parsley and serve hot.
Pepper lime salmon with black-eyed beans

2 Servings

Ingredients

- 2 salmon fillet (about 125g/4½oz each)
- 1 tbsp Creole or Cajun seasoning mix
- 100g/ 4oz basmati rice
- 400g can black-eyed beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 tbsp hot pepper sauce
- 1 tbsp clear honey
- 2 lime, 1 juiced, 1 cut into wedges
- small bunch coriander, roughly chopped, plus extra to serve

Directions

- Heat the grill to hot. Roll the salmon in the Creole seasoning to cover. Cook the basmati rice following pack instructions, adding the black-eyed beans for the final 2 minutes of cooking. Drain, place back in the pot and cover with a lid.
- Grill the salmon fillets for about 8 minutes without turning. While they cook, mix together the pepper sauce, honey and lime juice. Stir the coriander through the rice, drizzle the sauce over the salmon, scatter with extra coriander leaves, and serve with the lime wedges.
Jerk chicken curry with beans

4 Servings

Ingredients

- 8 chicken drumstick
- 4 tsp jerk seasoning (we used Schwartz)
- 4 tsp olive oil
- 2 red onion, sliced
- small bunch coriander, stalks finely chopped, leaves reserved
- 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
- 410g can kidney bean, drained

Directions

- Toss chicken in 1 tsp jerk seasoning and a little salt and pepper. Heat half the oil in a large frying pan, quickly brown the chicken, then remove. Tip in the remaining oil, onions and coriander stalks, then soften for 5 minutes, stirring in the remaining jerk seasoning for the final min.
- Return the drumsticks to the pan, pour over the tomatoes, then bring to a simmer. Cover, then cook for 20 minutes. Remove the lid, stir in the beans, then cook for 10 minutes more. Scatter with coriander and serve with rice.
Fig & walnut slice

12 Servings

Ingredients

50g whole almond, toasted
250g dried figs, hard stalk removed, chopped
50g dried apricots, halved
50g walnuts, halved
½ tbsp brandy
½ tbsp clear honey
pinch ground cloves

Directions

- Pulse the almonds in a food processor until most are finely chopped. Remove and transfer to a bowl. Whizz the figs until they form a sticky paste, then add this to the almonds with the remaining ingredients. Mix well, then shape into a sausage and allow to dry, uncovered, in the fridge or a cool, dry place for a week.
- Wrap and tie in baking parchment if giving away, then slice and serve alongside your favorite cheeses. Will keep in a cool place for up to 2 months.
CHAPTER 3: THE BAD STUFF

What you leave out of your body can be just as important as what you put in, and some foods and substances actually promote hair loss. Now that you know all the best stuff to incorporate into your diet to promote healthy hair, let’s take a look at the foods to avoid.

Alcohol

Although the occasional drink won’t harm you too much, over-indulgence can lead to severe consequences for your hair. It causes a reduction in your zinc levels, and as we mentioned previously, zinc helps promote hair growth and health. It also serves as a diuretic, and drains the body of nutrients and fluids.

Sugar

Sugar is bad for your skin, plays a big role in obesity and studies have linked it to heart disease, diabetes and other serious ailments. It’s time to add it to the list of foods that are bad for your hair, giving you yet another reason to put down that doughnut. When it comes to hair, sugar hinders the absorption of protein, as well as causing your blood glucose levels to spike. As this happens, your body responds by pumping out insulin. This, in turn, raises the levels of androgen in the body, a hormone that can make the hair follicles shrink.

Starchy Whites

This one goes hand-in-hand with sugar. Starchy white foods, such as white bread, white rice, pastas, cakes, and other similar over-processed starches are quickly converted into sugar in the body, triggering a similar response to the one you get if you were to just eat the sweet stuff. So if you don’t want high androgen levels and thinning hair, stick with whole wheat.
High Mercury Fish
High levels of mercury in the body has been linked to increased hair loss in patients. People who ingest a lot of these kinds of fish are unlikely to get mercury poisoning, but their hair will probably suffer. The general rule of thumb is, the bigger the fish is in nature, the more mercury it is likely to have. Steer clear of fish like swordfish, mackerel, and even some types of tuna.

Too Much Vitamin A
It is possible to have too much of a good thing. While adequate amounts of this vitamin can indeed lead to healthy hair, having too much can cause hair loss. This usually occurs when someone has ingested ultra-high doses of it through vitamin A supplements. Once your intake is managed, normal hair growth will resume.

Diet Sodas
You might think that you're choosing the healthier alternative when you reach for a diet soda. We've got some bad news for you—you're not. While it does contain fewer calories, the artificial sweeteners used (especially aspartame) have been linked to hair loss, and other more dangerous diseases. Stick to water instead.
So that's it, the secret to a great head of hair. It's all down to what you eat, and if you eat enough of the good stuff we've listed here, you'll stave off hair loss, thinning and color loss. Just remember these ten foods:

1. Eggs
2. Blueberries
3. Salmon
4. Spinach
5. Oysters
6. Lentils
7. Sweet Potatoes
8. Greek Yogurt
9. Walnuts
10. Chicken

We've also provided various recipes for you to get started on changing your diet for the better. With just a few simple tweaks to your diet, you'll have a fuller and more luxurious head of hair in no time.

Eric Kelly