

Men'sHealth

BEST LIFE

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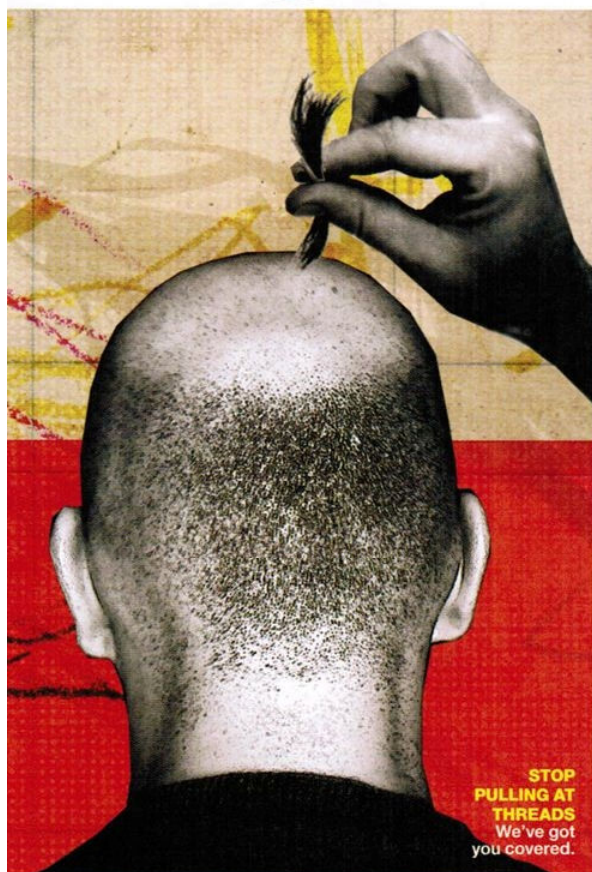


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Scalped

There are now more treatments than ever for balding—some even work—and a cure is on the horizon



**STOP
PULLING AT
THREADS**
We've got
you covered.

PHARMACOTHERAPY

Finasteride and Minoxidil

Rogaine's active ingredient, minoxidil, improves blood flow to the scalp, and Propecia's finasteride blocks dihydrotestosterone (DHT), a hormone that causes hair loss. Many men triple-treat by using both Propecia and Rogaine—they call it "fin and foam" (finasteride and foaming minoxidil)—plus Nizoral A-D, an antifungal medication used to fight dandruff that has been shown in studies to regrow hair.

OFF-LABEL THERAPY

Dutasteride

Sold as Avodart to men with enlarged prostates, this drug is more powerful than finasteride because it blocks both types of the enzyme that synthesizes DHT. "The reproductive side effects—decreased libido

and ejaculation disorders—may be persistent, so I don't usually recommend this medication for younger patients," says Dr. Bernstein.

SURGERY

Hair Transplant

The leading method today is follicular unit transplantation. It involves moving clumps of up to four hairs from the back and sides of the head to balding areas. "Hair transplants are most appropriate for people who have not responded to medical treatments," says Dr. Bernstein.

NATUROPATHY

Saw Palmetto and Pumpkin-Seed Oil

Saw palmetto extract has been shown in several small studies to shrink the prostate, working like finasteride to block DHT. Likewise, pumpkin-seed oil is believed to help

log on to the forum at hairlosstalk.com and you'll find men with screen names such as Sheddy Kreuger, Diffusion Guy, and DamnThis venting about going bald. Their anger is understandable. For the 2,000 years between Julius Caesar's comb-over and Ted Danson's toupee, men have fought a losing battle against the body's senseless hormonal war on its own hair.

The outlook has improved slightly in recent decades with Rogaine and Propecia, the first and only FDA-approved drugs to treat baldness. Used consistently, they can stop or delay balding and sometimes regrow hair. But they're treatments, not cures. The next decade, however, will bring peace to the men at hairlosstalk.com, as more effective treatments and even a permanent cure for baldness move from the lab to clinical trials. "The cure will come from gene therapy, and it's coming at a rapid clip," predicts Douglas Altchek, MD, a professor of dermatology at New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

If your bathroom mirror shows that you can't wait for a cure, Propecia and Rogaine should be your first option. "Start both medications as soon as your hair begins to thin for the best results," advises Robert Bernstein, MD, a clinical professor of dermatology at Columbia University. We asked the experts how the latest baldness treatments measure up.

JASON STEVENSON

break down DHT in the liver. "Men reluctant to try drugs are good candidates for these natural treatments," says Dr. Altchek, "but there is a tremendous placebo effect."

D.I.Y. LASER THERAPY

HairMax LaserComb

Cleared by the FDA in 2007 to treat baldness, the HairMax LaserComb works like minoxidil to increase blood flow to the scalp. However, the short duration (six months) and small sample size of its one peer-reviewed study had our experts recommending proven treatments such as Propecia and Rogaine over this device.

ELECTROTHERAPY

BX3.4 Hair Helmet

Giving new life to "helmet hair" jokes, this device emits electromagnetic pulses that the designers claim will build thicker, stronger, more manageable hair. "The Museum of Questionable Medical Devices, in St. Paul, is loaded with things like this," says Dr. Altchek. "I can't give any credence to this device."

ASK THE WELLNESS DOC

An essential guide to everlasting health

Lately, my ejaculations have been more of a dribble than an eruption. How can I improve them?

Ejaculation intensity can be affected by a range of factors, including nutrition, alcohol, hydration, sleep, medicines (such as antidepressants), and certain conditions (such as prostatitis or an injury to the seminiferous tubules). But the two biggest factors are frequency and excitement level. So assuming you're monitoring the factors above, dial back your frequency; abstaining for 72 hours is all the time your body needs (sperm is produced at an average rate of 1,500 per second per testicle). Also, focus on pleasing your partner more; you'll find that the more excited she is, the stronger your response will be. If these actions don't help, see your doctor.

PLEASURE PRINCIPLE
Turn her on to tap your own potential.



I heard about a new, more accurate prostate-cancer test. How can I get it?

You're referring to the ProstaMark EPCA-2 serum assay blood test. Preliminary research indicates that it can tell not only if you have prostate cancer, but also what kind it is, which is a major breakthrough in terms of sensitivity and specificity. The Johns Hopkins scientists who developed the test are racing to get it approved by the FDA, but it will probably take at least two years. Visit onconome.com to learn more.

Steven Lamm, MD, is a professor of medicine at New York University Medical Center. Submit questions to wellnessdoc@rodale.com.



BEST LIFE ONLINE

Find out how baldness will be cured in 10 years at BestLifeOnline.com/balding.