

In the News

The genetics of hair loss continues to be revealed. It is known that hair loss is a multifactorial process involving several genes. The first of the genes to be identified was shown an X-linked inheritance which led to the common belief that hair loss can be determined by look on your mother's side of the family. At the end of 2008, researchers found another gene which can be passed on by either mom or dad. For more information about the newest genetic discovery, check out <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/10/081012164439.htm>

Current Topic - Low Level Laser Therapy

An interesting technology has recently emerged as a non-surgical alternative to treat hair loss - low level laser therapy (LLLT). The technology has been around for almost 50 years and has been proven to be helpful in treating chronic pain, decreasing inflammation, and helping with wound healing. Interestingly, some of the initial experiments with LLLT in the 1960's suggested it can lead to increase hair growth. A Hungarian researcher, Andre Mester was investigating if LLLT caused cancer in mice when he noticed that the treated spots actually showed increased hair growth. This observation was mostly lost until the last few years.

There is no clear explanation for how LLLT may increase hair growth. One theory is that LLLT somehow increases blood flow to the treated area. Another suggests that LLLT transfers light energy directly to the hair cells and causes increase growth activity through this increase in energy. It does not appear to work at all on areas which are completely bald and is a treatment that requires constant maintenance to maintain effect.

LLLT devices designed to treat hair loss come in two varieties: those used at home and those designed for use in a physician's office. The home devices allow a person to perform treatment in their own home but generally do not provide the intensity or the even coverage of the office based systems. Though the office devices provide greater energy and even coverage, it does require repeated trips to the physician's office for the treatment. No studies have been performed to indicate if one is better than another though.

There are several home based systems which are marketed but only one has received clearance from the US FDA to indicate that it is effective at treating hair loss, the [Hairmax Lasercomb®](#). According to their web site, "The HairMax LaserComb® is cleared by the FDA for The Promotion of Hair Growth in males with Androgenetic Alopecia who have Norwood Hamilton Classifications of IIa-V and Fitzpatrick Skin Types I to IV." Unfortunately, there are no published placebo controlled double blind studies to indicate the effectiveness of LLLT at treating hair loss.

LLLT appears to be useful for patients both male and female suffering from androgenic alopecia. It does not appear to be effective in treating areas which are already bald and is more effective at treating areas which are thinning. Treatment protocols used in physician offices generally involve treatments 2-3 times per week for 6 weeks then once a week for the next 3-4 months. If positive results are seen, additional touch up procedures are undertaken on a regular basis. Each session takes approximately 20 minutes. Home treatment systems have similar protocols. Though touch up procedures are generally felt to be necessary if positive results are seen, no study has looked at results more than 6 months after treatment.

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