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dent, having a baby, or going under general anesthesia) can also cause hair to cycle through the resting, growing, and falling out stages at an accelerated rate (a condition known as telogen effluvium), resulting in significant shedding and limpness. Thyroid problems also can affect hair volume, notes Amy McMichael, M.D., a dermatology professor at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, NC.

**CURE:** Stick to daily shampoos and conditioners, which are light and won't weigh down hair. Condition only on ends, and use no more than a quarter-size dollop. Applying a volumizer to damp hair can also provide some added lift. (Try Suave Daily Protection Shampoo and Conditioner and Clairol Herbal Essences Natural Volume Root Volumizer.)

Another solution is to try a different haircut. "A chin- to shoulder-length bob with long layers stacks the hair on top of itself, making it look fuller," says John James, a stylist at New York City's Lépine Salon.

As for telogen effluvium and thyroid conditions? Once diagnosed by your doctor, they are treatable.

## PROBLEM: wacky color mutations

"Color depends upon the amount of melanin [pigment] in the hair," says Wolf. Melanin production is genetically controlled and may change at *any* age. However, hair also may produce more or less melanin due to hormonal stimulation. Sun exposure and chlorine also may alter color (by changing melanin's chemical makeup).

**CURE:** Control the damage that the sun and chlorine can inflict by using UV-blocking styling products and shampooing immediately following a dip in chlorinated water. (Try Nexxus Aloe Rid Clarifying Shampoo.) Another suggestion to help you get rid of chlorine-green, from Elizabeth Stenstrom, owner of L Salon & Color Group in San Mateo, CA: Lather up with a clarifying shampoo three times within the same shower. Each time, leave product in hair for three minutes, then rinse out.

## PROBLEM: flakes

The flakes we call dandruff are actually a condition known as seborrhea, which is associated with the overgrowth of the pityrosporum fungus, says Miami dermatologist Debra Price, M.D. Under normal circumstances, this fungus doesn't affect the scalp. But stress and certain nervous system disorders (such as

Parkinson's disease) have been thought to trigger adverse reactions to the fungus, resulting in inflammation (hence the itch) and the rapid sloughing of skin cells (hence the flakes).

**CURE:** Over-the-counter medicated shampoos that contain pyrithione zinc, tar, or salicylic acid are all effective flake fighters, but avoid scrubbing them into your scalp too vigorously as this may exacerbate your condition. (Try Head & Shoulders Refresh or Scalpicin.)

## PROBLEM: hair loss

Losing up to 100 hairs a day is perfectly normal, says Nia Terezakis, M.D., a dermatology professor at Tulane University in New Orleans. However, nearly 30 million American women experience genetically programmed hair loss, a condition known as androgenetic alopecia (AGA). AGA can start as early as age 15, although it usually becomes noticeable in women in their 20s to 40s. A second cause of hair loss in women is alopecia areata, which comes on suddenly and leaves hair patchy. Doctors are not sure what causes this type of loss—although many theorize that it is an autoimmune disorder—and there is no known cure.

**CURE:** Two-percent minoxidil (Rogaine), applied twice a day to bald spots, can prolong hair's growing phase and slow down shedding; for continuous results, treatment requires a lifelong commitment. While Rogaine won't help alopecia areata sufferers, weaves, falls, wigs, and integration systems (polyurethane-based hairpieces that allow one's natural hair to peek through) can help to mask loss. For more on hair loss, contact the Women's Institute for Fine & Thinning Hair (sponsored by Rogaine) at 877-554-HAIR; for more on alopecia areata, call the National Alopecia Areata Foundation at 415-456-4644; for more on weaves, falls, wigs, and integration systems, call Jacquelyn Wigs at 800-272-2424. □

## test your tress IQ

1. One hundred hairbrush strokes a night are good for your hair. true false
2. Hair can go into "shock"—and curl in places it didn't used to—after being cut. true false
3. It's best to condition every time you shampoo. true false
4. Coloring your hair is always damaging. true false

### ANSWERS:

1. **False:** Excessive brushing is extremely damaging to hair—especially to African-American hair, which, because it is usually curly, may be brittle and more apt to break. For safe styling, choose natural bristles, or bristles with plastic ball tips, which won't tear hair.
2. **True:** The sheer weight of long hair may keep cowlicks and curls from popping up; once you lop off a lot of your locks, they could reappear.
3. **False:** If your hair lacks volume, you may be weighing it down with too many moisturizing (read: heavy) ingredients—condition (ends only) every other day.
4. **False:** Although chemical colorants can damage hair, if it just lacks volume but is otherwise in fine condition, coloring can plump up the hair shaft, making locks appear thicker.