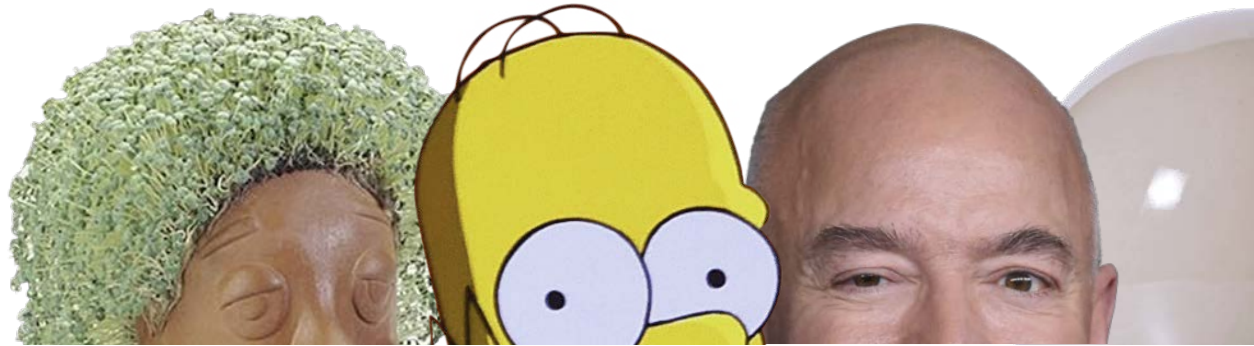


## HOW TO KEEP



**DENY IT NO LONGER, FRIEND.** Like many men across time and place, you're losing your hair. Just be glad that you're losing your hair now. Because today, more than any other day in history, you can do something about it.

Think of the poor ancient Egyptians, who applied pastes of ground-up animal fat to their heads. Hippocrates, meanwhile, supposedly tried a blend of opium and wine. Sixteenth-century remedies included, among other things, the ashes of a hedgehog.

Today we have science-backed topical creams and pharmaceutical wonder pills that actually work. And you should use them. Now. Because the longer you hold off, the more likely you may want a hair transplant. Not that that's the worst outcome. The procedure is as safe, accessible, and effective as any other modern cosmetic surgery. The key is to know your options and how to harness them. Go for it, or go bald. The choice is yours.

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—Written and reported by Adam Hurly, Paul Schrodt, and Chris Hatler

### SURGERY

We're past the era of vertically implanted plugs and strip scars. Hair transplantation in 2026 is transformative. The procedure costs anywhere from a few thousand bucks up past \$10,000 depending on the provider. But it's damn near impossible to tell when someone gets a good one. And trust us, you know a guy or two who's had this procedure, even if they won't admit it.

#### How It Works

Follicular unit extraction is the most common hair-transplant method today. Doctors harvest follicles from a donor area, usually the back and sides of the scalp, then place them into the areas where you're thinning. Sometimes doctors will transplant beard, neck, or body hairs to add density.

#### Choose the Right Provider

Every guy and his brother is flying to Turkey for a cost-effective transplant.

That's totally fine; the doctors there know what they're doing. But do your homework and check references on the lead surgeon. Says New York-based hair-transplant surgeon Gary Linkov, "A patient should focus on picking their surgeon and then trust that your surgeon has picked an elite team to help them do the procedure."

#### Recovery and Regrowth

During the first month post-surgery, take it easy. No vigorous exercise, no drinking or smoking. And don't wear anything tight on your head. Redness, swelling, and scabbing are all normal side effects. Beware: Transplanted hairs will shed around the four- to five-week mark, but after that you should see steady regrowth over the next six to nine months, peaking at a year. After that, your doctor might recommend a touch-up, which is part of long-term planning, not a sign that the first surgery failed.

### PHARMACEUTICALS

Not everyone can afford a hair transplant. But minoxidil and finasteride are two medicines on the market that are clinically proven to help with hair loss. The earlier you start using them, the better the chances are that you don't end up as a less funny Larry David. And if you do get a transplant, min and fin are pretty much required for hairline maintenance.

#### Minoxidil

You know it as Rogaine. Doctors know it as the treatment that actually works. Available over the counter as a topical cream or foam, minoxidil "lengthens the growth cycle of the follicle and enlarges the follicle so you can see thicker, longer hair," says Dr. Debbie Palmer, medical director and cofounder of Dermatology Associates of New York. She notes that results are seen in four to six months of use, peaking at one year. Clinical studies have reported that 62 percent of users rated it as effective or very effective.

# YOUR HAIR



## Finasteride

Finasteride is the generic term for Propecia, which blocks dihydrotestosterone (DHT), the hormone responsible for male-pattern hair loss, from shriveling your follicles. For a long time, it was most commonly taken orally, but topical versions have become increasingly common due to reports of sexual and depressive side effects. It's available only via prescription, so talk to your dermatologist.

## EVERYTHING ELSE

Don't believe the Instagram ads. Random supplements won't re-fertilize your blighted scalp; most pill producers are just preying on your insecurities. But if you're looking to take your hair-recovery journey one step further, the following solutions can't hurt.

## Injections

Your blood contains plasma, which contains platelets, which contain growth factors unique to your DNA. Doctors can extract your blood, isolate the plasma,

and reinject it into your scalp. Sounds unsettling, but research shows that it can regrow hair—mainly for those with alopecia—though it can be costly. Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) or platelet-rich fibrin (PRF) injections run anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000 per session and require multiple rounds.

## Laser Therapy

Low-level laser therapy (LLLT), or red-light therapy, is FDA approved in devices like laser caps and combs. It's a safe, pain-free option, and research from the medical journal *Lasers in Surgery and Medicine* has shown some evidence of hair-growth stimulation.

## Supplements

Saw palmetto, biotin, niacin, zinc, rosemary oil, castor oil. These are easy to find in capsule form, and some are used in shampoos specifically targeting hair loss. But don't rely on them. "In my experience, supplements work best as part of a broader approach rather than as a cure," says Emily Clark, senior barber for barbershop chain Fellow Barber.

## THE LOST ART OF GOING BALD

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**BEFORE YOU TRY ANYTHING IN THE PREVIOUS COLUMNS,** let me suggest something: Just go bald.

Men throughout history have grasped tightly to their youth by fussing over their hair. Powdered wigs? Weird, gross, but George Washington wore one anyway. Toupees? Ugly, finicky,

but *Time* reported that 2.5 million guys owned them in 1970.

Now there are dudes like me, balding in the surgically and pharmaceutically obsessed 2020s. In a survey conducted by the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery, the number of hair-transplant patients has surged by 20 percent since 2021, an overwhelming majority of them doing so to "become/feel more attractive." That self-consciousness is commercially exploitable. The hair-restoration market is projected to reach almost \$19 billion by 2033.

I sympathize. At 26 years old, trapped in the throes of Covid-19 with nothing but Internet advice and a receding hairline, I purchased my first canister of topical Rogaine. The foam smelled weird. Felt greasy. But I rubbed it all over my head anyway. Every day. Twice a day. For more than two years, until I upgraded to a finasteride-minoxidil-hybrid cream. Could I be one of the success stories? One of those lucky guys who elicit "Looks great, bro" comments on before-and-after Reddit posts?

Then I turned 29 and had an epiphany antithetical to anyone who's ever turned 29: Thirty is a *promised land*. Marriage, kids, a steady career—all terrible anxieties just a year or two before—actually looked *enticing*. And within the coming decade, I'd collect wisdom and insight, twin assets unattainable by those convinced they'll live forever. Distill the messy memories of my youth into orderly, purposeful stories. And hindsight: Though my vision will degrade, my hindsight will certainly improve beyond 20/20.

A man must trade a piece of himself to receive such gifts. So I grabbed the white tube out of the bathroom cabinet and tossed it. Sure, my forehead looks longer. And just as sunrise breaks through clouds, so shines my bare crown. I keep a closer crop these days, grow my beard longer, wear my favorite baseball cap when the occasion allows. There's so much life ahead; who needs hair to live it?

I made my decision. Think about yours. For every Jerry, there must be a George. —Chris Hatler