Male Grooming Issues That Bear Watching

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Typically, men's grooming routines are quick and straightforward: a daily shower and shave, a comb through the hair, and a clipper to the nails when needed. But if a man notices a change to his nails, hair or skin, it should give him pause, according to Paul W. Wallace, MD, a dermatologist specializing in ethnic skin care who is the medical half of the "Bump Patrol Smooth Crew."

Wallace, who is an attending physician at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and medical chairman of the National Psoriasis Foundation, suggests that men make a special visit to their dermatologist beyond the recommended annual skin exam if they notice any of these five skin, hair or nail issues:

Nails show a change in texture or shape. This could be an early sign of arthritis or dietary deficiency. A change in color, be it a small dot or change to the whole nail, could be a sign of a fungal infection. If this is the case, Wallace says this condition should be addressed early to prevent nail-root involvement. But the infection could also be a sign of melanoma, the leading cause of death from skin disease. For African-American men, melanoma is found most often under the fingernail or toenail.

Hair unexpectedly changes in texture, color or rate of hair loss. It could indicate underlying medical issues. Hair can serve as a window to the general health of an individual and provide an early warning of medical problems, such as thyroid disease or vitiligo.

Scalp feels tender to touch or grooming. This isn't normal. If it becomes pink, red or white (depigmented), feels soft or lumpy, or develops bumps, pustules or sores, visit a dermatologist.

Beard feels overly irritated, has unexpected hair loss or changes in texture. Shaving might not be the cause. However, when bumps or whiteheads go untreated, shaving could exacerbate the problem.

Mole changes in size, color or shape. It could be a warning sign of evolving skin cancer. Also, when a mole experiences any trauma, bleeding, pain or constant itch, a dermatologist should examine it. Even the darkest-pigmented skin runs the risk of skin cancer.

Aside from the obvious health advantages to early detection of diseases, early intervention could

also save hair and nails and minimize scarring. While keeping these five signs in mind, Wallace suggests that men also reexamine their basic grooming routines and make simple adjustments where needed. For example, a proper shave, which includes everything from the direction of shaving to the aftershave used, can prevent irritation in the first place. Wallace recommends products, such as Bump Patrol's aftershave formulas, that calm and treat the skin with the help of anti-inflammatories, antiseptics, humectants and emollients. "Without irritation, there's no inflammation," he explains. "And without inflammation, there's no threat of razor bumps that could become infected."

For more information about Wallace and proper shaving techniques, click here and also click here.

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