Tress-Essential Elements

Top 5 nutrients for healthy hair

September 5, 2016 By Gerrie E. Summers

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1. Vitamin A/Beta-Carotene

Vitamin A helps keep scalp and hair cells healthy and produces sebum (an oil) in the scalp. A sebum deficiency can cause dandruff, and excess vitamin A (through supplements) can cause hair loss. Find vitamin A in: oysters, yogurt and salmon. Also, the body synthesizes beta-carotene, which is found in sweet potatoes, mangoes, cantaloupe, apricots, carrots, pumpkin and chilies, into vitamin A.

2. B Vitamins

The vitamins listed below are key for healthy hair:

- B-3 (niacin) promotes blood flow to the scalp and transports nutrients to the hair follicles. Find it in: salmon, chicken, tuna, nuts, green beans, peas and lentils.
- B-5 (pantothenic acid) nourishes hair follicles, promotes elasticity, strength and shine and helps prevent hair loss and graying. Find it in: yogurt, eggs, whole grain cereals, peas, lentils and meat.
- B-6 (pyridoxine) helps the body produce melanin, the pigment that gives hair its color. Find it in: salmon, egg yolk, liver, cereals, grains, soy flour, yeast, spinach and walnuts.
- B-7 (biotin) reacts with enzymes to make amino acids, which are necessary to build keratin, a protein needed for hair health. A deficiency causes hair loss or brittle strands. Find it in: eggs, liver, soy and walnuts.
- B-12 helps prevent hair loss and premature gray hair. Find it in: fish, oysters, eggs, chicken and milk.

3. Vitamin C

Good for circulation and hair follicles. A deficiency of C can cause hair breakage. Find it in:

kiwifruit, citrus fruits, peppers, blueberries, sweet potatoes, spinach, tomatoes, strawberries and broccoli.

4. Vitamin E

This antioxidant improves circulation in the scalp. Find it in: blueberries, kiwifruit, tomatoes, spinach, walnuts, wheat germ, sunflower seeds, almonds, cabbage and avocados.

5. Zinc and Iron

Both these trace minerals are key to hair growth. Zinc helps build keratin and collagen, and iron helps red blood cells carry oxygen to the hair follicles. Not enough zinc can trigger hair loss and dry, flaky scalp. Meanwhile, iron contributes to an optimal hair growth cycle. Find zinc in: seafood, beef, lamb, eggs, whole grains, beans and nuts. Find iron in: oysters, spinach, tomatoes, lean meats, shrimp, eggs, soybeans, lentils, beans and dark-green vegetables.

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