

While short hair has been all the rage this year, some celebrities such as Jennifer Lawrence and Gigi Hadid have opted for classic, long locks. A look at their hair can tell you that while length matters, natural good health and sheen do much more to ensure glory to one's crown.

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Longer and stronger: Hacks for healthy, long hair

Healthy hair grows up to half an inch per month but a lot depends on one's genetics and overall health. To optimise hair growth and reduce breakages, good scalp health is non-negotiable, especially as new cells are formed in the roots.

Founder of the Lotus Concept, trichologist Dr Candy Lewis Williams believes that healthy hair will not break as easily as dry, brittle hair, and therefore will reach its natural maximum length.

According to the expert, a giveaway for healthy hair is that it shines naturally, without requiring external styling products. She recommends a hair trim every eight weeks to get rid of spilt ends, which

can be a major reason behind hair breakage.

Research shows that healthy hair grows quicker because there is less breakage and thinning. Hair that's well-taken-care-of, for instance, can retain at least 90 per cent of its shine and thickness consistently throughout 18 inches of length. The same length of hair can thin out by 98 per cent if unhealthy. Esha Rushdi, owner The

Powder Room, Dhaka, says, "Keeping the hair well moisturised through the use of essential oils such as tea tree and rosemary, which are easily available nowadays, can help prevent dryness, especially in textured hair."

"Basic haircare, such as using a good shampoo and conditioner, plus regularly using masks with basic ingredients such as bananas, yoghurt, egg, and fenugreek seeds can also help retain the shine and health of hair."

Most of the beauty one sees in hair comes from a well-nourished scalp. Being thorough with cleansing and exfoliation will ensure that hair growth is not stunted due to build up, fungal infections, or simply, an itchy, irritated scalp.

Chelcey Salinger, an International Association of Trichologists-certified expert practising in Australia mentions, "The pH of the scalp is about 5.5. Products that disturb this pH can also influence the balance of microbes on the scalp, which, in turn, can cause scaling, itching and the like."

She recommends using a shampoo and conditioner with a matching pH as that of the scalp for optimum scalp health.

Esha Rushdi gets a lot of customers with PCOS, concerned about thinning hair.

"While we often suggest haircuts that hide the thinned-out patches, a good way to fuel hair growth — beyond lifestyle changes of course — is a regular scalp massage. They boost blood circulation and induce hair growth," she says.

Opting for protein-rich ingredients such as amino acids and keratin, rather than silicones and heavy oils in haircare products, can help nourish hair, and repair damage. Similarly, one must nourish one's health from within, if good hair is to be maintained.

"What you eat can affect the health of your hair," advises Rushdi. "Food rich in vitamin A, D3, B, E and omega-3 fatty acids — eggs, spinach, berries, fish, avocados, etc. are great for hair health and follicle function. A lack of these nutrients may slow down hair growth or even cause hair loss."

By Munira Fidai

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