

Another Side Effect of COVID: Hair Loss

“The stress of infection can cause digestive issues. If you are not digesting protein, you are not growing healthy hair.”

More and more clinicians have been sharing that hair loss can be a side effect of COVID. But regardless of the cause, if someone is losing their hair it's a major concern. The technical term is telogen effluvium. It's considered a stress induced condition and can be caused by all kinds of stress like an autoimmune disease, poor diet, post-surgery, postpartum, and now COVID. You can see an article to the right.

Let's unpack the process. Chronic stress resets the nervous system toward sympathetic dominance and sets the stage for the fight or flight pattern discussed decades ago by Dr. Hans Selye. Multiple mechanisms are affected; the microbiome changes, pH changes, digestion changes, leaky gut issues, cortisol rises and eventually falls.

Think of cortisol like the gas pedal on a car. We need acceleration to travel, but when it's chronically elevated, pedal to the metal so to speak, there is danger traveling at high speed. The body in its wisdom tries to put the brakes on to slow everything down via the pituitary/hypothalamic axis.



Less TSH is released by the pituitary, and everything slows down as a hypothyroid clinical picture develops. If it's chronic stress and the hypothyroid continues, your energy pool is compromised or diminished. See a link to the right for thyroid tests and subjective indicators. If your energy pool is compromised the parietal cells don't have enough energy to concentrate hydrogen ions to make sufficient hydrochloric acid.

Just to give you an idea how the stress of illness affects hydrochloric acid production, Dr. Berkson shared a story of how healthy college students were assessed for a hydrochloric acid research study. Once baseline levels were establish-

ed, everyone got the flu. Since they had the baseline data, they decided to see how long it would take to return to baseline levels of HCL. For some of the students, it took 2 years to return to normal. This shows how the stress of infection can cause digestive issues.

Guess what? If you are not digesting protein, you are not growing healthy hair. To have healthy hair growth, we need at least 3 things: digestible protein, vitamins and minerals or cofactors to support energy production, and the appropriate hormones. I say digestible because if you are not digesting, it won't do you any good.

So, number ONE, increase protein and support

hydrochloric acid digestion. See link to the right for details. My current favorite protein when it comes to hair growth is Collagen Protein Vanilla Creme. 2 scoops provide 17 grams of collagen which is essential for the growth of hair, skin and nails and 20 grams of protein. It also comes in Chocolate Creme, but I mix the vanilla collagen in my coffee or steel cut oats in the morning.

Number 2, take a well-rounded multivitamin mineral that can support energy pathways of the mitochondria like ProMulti-Plus. (I use 2, three times a day.)

And number 3, address adrenals to balance sympathetic dominance. Biotics makes a few different adrenal products to reduce cortisol. The first product they manufactured was ADHS for Adrenal HyperSecretor. ADHS contains adaptogenic botanicals as well as trace vitamins and minerals to support adrenal health. This product has been an effective staple for doctors for the last 20 years to reduce cortisol. Use 3 bid am and afternoon.

Another product I really like is Bio-Ashwagandha. Many of us are familiar with Ashwagandha's ability to modulate cortisol, but Ashwagandha affects multiple systems. Ashwagandha has been studied as adaptogenic, antioxidant, anticancer, anti-anxiety, antidepressant, cardio-protective, thyroid modulating, immune-modulating, antibacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective as

well as a cognitive enhancing agent. Use 2 bid for 30 days and then reduce to 1 bid by itself or add 1 bid to the ADHS dose we just discussed.

Here's a caveat that I want to remind you of. When chronic stress sets in, cortisol goes up which is a good thing. Hans Selye called it the adaptive phase. But if that flight or flight pattern persists, the body goes into what's called the exhaustion stage and cortisol drops. When that happens, we use ADB5-Plus, 2 tablets bid to rebuild adrenals. At the link to the right, I discuss this product in more detail and 4 different in-office tests you can use to assess when to start and stop adrenal therapies.

We started our conversation discussing how chronic stress resets our nervous system into sympathetic overdrive. And as a result, repair and restore mechanisms take a back seat and hair, skin and nail growth can be affected. To me this is a perfect opportunity to talk with your patients about wellness care vs. disease care. Because by providing raw materials and nutrients to calm the adrenals and support digestion, we can tip the scales back toward parasympathetic balance. And once the repair healing mechanisms are in place the body can begin to make healthy hair, skin and nails.

Thanks for taking time to be with me, and I look forward to being with you again next Tuesday.