From fenugreek to folic acid
The science of healthy hair
Gerry Freundl

A healthy, shiny, full head of hair is a sign of inner health. Good nutrition is required for strong hair; if certain nutrients are missing from the diet, hair loss can result. Natural remedies for hair loss have been shown to improve hair's texture and fullness.

Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) has a unique mix of chemical constituents, many of which contribute to maintaining healthy-looking hair and a well-nourished scalp. Hair strength is adversely affected by a protein-poor diet. Readily bioavailable proteins in fenugreek can help correct this deficiency and help promote a thicker hair shaft and increase hair strength.

Hormonal balance is also related to decreased hair-shaft thickness and decreased hair strength. Dihydrotestosterone (DHT) is a hormone present in higher-than-normal concentrations in hair follicles of people who have decreased hair-shaft size and hair strength.

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Steroid saponins are compounds that help bind and eliminate extra cholesterol and hormones in the body. When excess cholesterol is eliminated, it has been shown that less DHT can be made. Some sterols (plant steroids) may also work to block DHT receptor sites. When sterols prevent DHT from binding to receptor sites in hair follicles, the existing hair looks healthier and fuller, and feels stronger.

Flavonoids are known to improve the health of blood vessels. This can lead to an improved supply of blood to all parts of the body, including the scalp.

The alkaloid trigonellin assists in the expansion of blood vessels and the resulting increase of blood flow to the hair follicle is thought to stimulate hair growth.

Various B vitamins are also important for the maintenance of healthy-looking, strong hair.

Riboflavin (vitamin B₂) deficiencies are associated with an increased production of sebum (oil produced by hair follicles). According to some experts, increased sebum production can result in reduced strength of the hair shaft. Vitamin B₂ can help reduce sebum production and also supports proper cell growth.

Nicotinamide, also called niacinamide, is important for proper blood flow to the scalp and the hair follicle and is important for the metabolic activities in the cells.

Pantothenic acid (vitamin B₅) is particularly important for the health of the adrenal glands. Weakness of the adrenal glands, leading to hormonal imbalances, may increase DHT levels.

Pyridoxine hydrochloride (vitamin B₆) was studied in Poland and found to help with healthy hair growth.

Folic acid is known for its importance in healthy cellular activity, proper cell division, and proper hair growth. Special formulations of natural remedies free of trans fats and animal products, which have been shown to strengthen and improve hair health, are available at your health food store.

(Note: Health Canada does not recommend fenugreek for those on hormonal, anticoagulant, or MAO drug therapies, or for pregnant or breastfeeding women).

Gerry Freundl is the director of marketing at Hair Gro Technology.