

Having a Baby Gave Me a Receding Hairline

BY KORIN MILLER JULY 7, 2017 11:30 AM



I wasn't the first one in my group of friends to have a baby, so by the time my first child was born, I knew that I could expect to lose some hair in the postpartum period. I did, of course, and I was proud of myself for keeping it together—even when I pulled out large clumps of hair in the shower.

When I had my second baby, I figured I was in for the same kind of experience. What I wasn't prepared for what actually happened: I developed a full-on receding hairline. At first, I noticed that my side part seemed more defined, but I didn't give it much thought. But one day my husband snapped a photo of me holding our baby on a boat, and I freaked out when I saw it. "I'm going bald!" I shrieked, before starting to cry.

I immediately went to the bathroom so I could freak out in private and noticed in the mirror that I had the same issue on the other side of my head. My hairline was starting look like an aging man's.

So I started doing things to try to cover it up. I changed my part to try to hide the bald spots, wore hats, stopped pulling my hair back (which showed how obvious the hair loss was), and debated whether or not to call a dermatologist. I knew that postpartum hair loss was normal, but I had never heard of it giving someone a freaking receding hairline.

But according to **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, this kind of hair loss after pregnancy is “extremely common.” The process is known as telogen effluvium, he says, and it happens because, during periods of physical or emotional stress (like pregnancy), the body may not fully support hair follicles with nutrition—instead nutrients are shuttled to more essential parts of the body. So hair follicles become weak and may die. When a person’s body recovers, new, healthy follicles grow underneath weak ones and push the weak follicles out, causing shedding, he explains. The problem is there might be some bald spots that crop up in between, even in the front of your head.

Hormones may come into play as well, says Jessica Shepherd, M.D., an assistant professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology and director of minimally invasive gynecology at The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Chicago. Your body goes through a lot of hormonal shifts during pregnancy, she explains, like a big increase in estrogen and the pregnancy hormone progesterone, which can throw your hair’s ability to grow out of whack during the postpartum period.

The good news is that the hair grows back for most women—it just takes time and patience. “It may take up to a year,” Dr. Goldenberg says. In rare cases, telogen effluvium may be a chronic issue, or it may uncover another type of genetic hair loss known as androgenetic alopecia. But again, those are rare situations.

If you have postpartum hair loss and wish you didn’t (*raises hand*), Dr. Goldenberg recommends looking into what you’re eating. “I routinely check labs in my patients to make sure they have enough iron and vitamin B,” he says. Using 5 percent Rogaine might also help (just check in with your doctor first if you’re breastfeeding). And if you’re still struggling, talk to your dermatologist, who may be able to recommend some in-office and at-home treatments.

Just don’t be afraid to call your doctor. “If there is not regrowth, it is always OK to talk to a dermatologist sooner rather than later,” Dr. Shepherd says. “Some treatments work better when you start them earlier.”

Eventually, my hair started growing back, and I now have three-inch-long hairs that stick up straight around the front of my head where my bald spots used to be. And on some days I’ve got a legit Conan O’Brien bouffant situation going on up there. I’ve tried hairspray, gel, bobby pins, and flatironing, but the hair refuses to lie flat. It’s not my favorite look, but I’m thankful, at least, that my receding hairline is a thing of the past.