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THE KING MAKER

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WE SOLVE >THE BORDER PROBLEM

WITHOUT DEPORTING ANYONE

*De Niro Smiles!

(* OKAY, MAYBE IT'S MORE LIKE A GRIN, BUT WE'LL TAKE IT)

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(THE BODY)

Losing your hair? Thanks to major scientific advances, you no longer have to resort to desperate measures. Here are **fifteen things** you need to know by Kyla Jones

*A WHOLE NEW BALD GAME

1

I've got a great head of hair, but my mom's dad looks like George Costanza. Does this mean I'll be bald one day?

Numerous genes contribute to hair loss, and these genes can be inherited from your mother or your father. While researchers admit there is a slightly higher predisposition for baldness when the hair-loss genes come from Mom, it's not high enough to be significant. "It's overstated that it's more dominant on the mother's side," says New York-based hair-restoration surgeon Neil Sadick. "It actually occurs with almost equal frequency on both sides." Some doctors say the best way to predict whether you'll go bald is to look to your father and your grandfathers and pay attention to their patterns of baldness. If your dad lost all his hair in his twenties starting from the crown, and you're 35 with a full head of hair but a slight receding hairline, you can assume that his balding pattern has nothing to do with yours. But if your hair-loss pattern seems to be mimicking Grandpa's, chances are it will continue to do so.

* Think Yul Brynner ever whined about being bald? He's one of many who made it look good.

2. I've heard that stress will make you go bald faster. Is this true? >> There is some evidence that stress can accelerate hair loss, but just because you have a heavy workload one week doesn't mean you'll have a bare skull by the weekend. The kind of stress that makes you lose your hair is excessive or long-term. Plus, once the stress is relieved, the follicles should resume producing normal hair (or whatever kind of hair your follicles were producing before the stress started). If you like to braid your hair—tightly, such as cornrows—the same thing can happen. Unless you damage your hair excessively with chemicals, it's unlikely that you will make yourself permanently bald.

3. What about wearing hats? >> This is a myth. Also myths: washing your hair too much and jerking off a lot.

4. I'll do or take anything to hold on to my hair. Are there any drugs that actually work? >> There are only two FDA-approved options for hair loss: Rogaine and Propecia. Rogaine is the stuff you rub on your head, and its active ingredient is minoxidil. By enlarging the follicles in your scalp, it keeps your hair in a longer-than-normal growth phase, thereby delaying hair's eventual exit. But because it just delays the loss, the American Hair Loss Association (AHLA) considers it a marginal drug in the war on hairlessness. And while Rogaine claims that two-thirds of users regrow hair with the product, some research cites lower success rates. "It's a Band-Aid," says Spencer Kobren, founder of the AHLA, who used the product when it came out in 1988. "It gives you a false sense of security until you have to go through losing your hair again."

Thankfully, researchers came up with Propecia, a pill with the active ingredient finasteride. Finasteride gets

to the heart of the problem by blocking production of something called dihydrotestosterone (DHT). For baldies, DHT is the hormone that shrinks your follicles, causing your hair to thin or fall out completely. Many men are afraid to take Propecia because of the risk of sexual side effects, such as impotence, but the odds are pretty low—only 1.7 percent of users develop a problem. Moreover, Propecia should help you keep your hair for a longer period of time than Rogaine. Kobren, who began losing his hair twenty years ago, takes Proscar—a drug containing a higher dosage of finasteride that is intended to shrink enlarged prostates—and has been able to fend off further hair loss. Studies also show that finasteride makes your thin strands thicker over time, thus increasing hair weight. One thing to remember: Although no evidence of the drug has been found in semen, it can be harmful to a fetus, so some doctors don't recommend Propecia for men actively trying to get their wives pregnant.

5. What about all those "natural" treatments for balding that I've heard about? >> As long as baldness has existed, there have been treatments for it born out of desperation. Pigeon droppings, hippopotamus fat, the ashes of domesticated mice—these are some of the ancient "remedies" for hair loss. We're not quite so desperate today, but we still hold out hope that in nature we will find the secret to keeping thick, lustrous hair. One of the most popular remedies today is saw palmetto, which is supposed to block DHT production in much the same way Propecia does, though research indicates it isn't nearly as effective as the prescription drug itself. Products boasting ingredients like biotin, silica, and folic acid aren't likely to stimulate hair growth or even maintain it, but they might help make your hair stronger and thicker while you

6.

Will wearing a toupee make me look desperate?

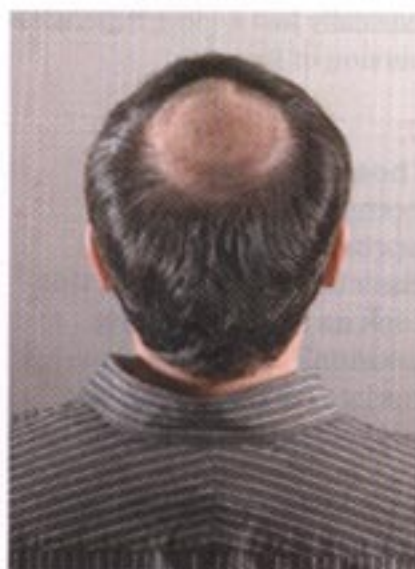
>> Not as much as it used to, but as the author found out, it still doesn't make it worth it.

At 42, I'd spent a decade as the unhappy host to a slowly expanding bald spot. What had started as a thinly haired golf-ball-sized hole in my life was now the circumference of a yarmulke. I'd always heard that if you were going to get a piece, get it before you are thought of as "bald." I'd also heard that with new toupee technologies emerging, the bald and balding no longer need to carry a sliding ferret precariously aboard their bare scalps. So instead of laughing at the Hair Club ads like usual, I made an appointment.

After a number of consultations—where I learned about how my piece, dubbed the Bio-Matrix, would change my life—I went in for the fitting. When my stylist spun me around and handed me a mirror, I was astounded. It looked natural, thick, and dark. Indeed, once roughly the size and shape of a deflated tetherball, my skull had taken on a fuller, more human shape. My friends and family were amazed. All agreed that they couldn't tell I was sporting a piece.

Then, a week after my initial fitting, the itching began. It was a minor agony. And because the piece was glued to my head, I couldn't rip it off myself. Late one night, the itching became so intense I even considered going to the emergency room to have the piece removed. Fortunately, the itching subsided, but after about six weeks I encountered yet another problem: My new hair had begun to slip and slide, to bunch up in the back so it resembled some sort of cranial tumor.

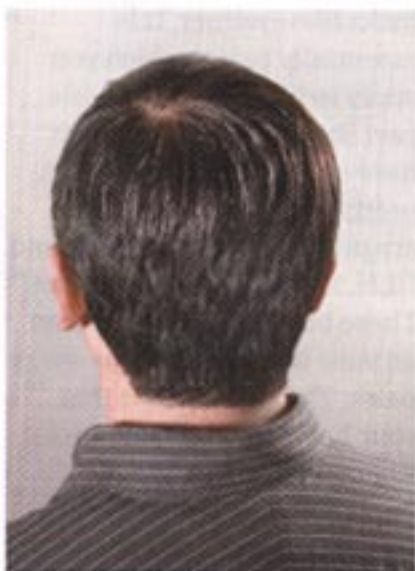
Here's the point and the problem: Life with a hairpiece, especially one this undetectable, isn't simply glue-and-go. This is a high-maintenance lie. Some wearers get a new piece every two weeks. Some visit the Hair Club for styling and regluing



The pre-rug spot.



The author and his new friend.



Bald no more! (Sort of.)

more often than that. For many men, that time commitment and even the high price of a Hair Club "membership" (\$1,900, in addition to the hundreds a month you'll pay for maintenance and new pieces) are well worth it. There's good news here: You can look decent with fake hair. But for me, the cost and effort turned out to be prohibitive. And so I'm back to my deflated-tetherball head, spending my hairpiece money on wine instead—so much the better to forget what's behind. —JAMES O'BRIEN

(THE BODY)

have it. Be especially wary of treatments like Follicare, which claims to be natural but is basically just a more expensive version of Rogaine.

7. I hear that TV commentators use sprinkle-on hair to hide their bald spots. Does this look as ridiculous as it sounds? >> For about twenty

bucks a bottle, you can buy products like Toppik, which is microfiber "hair" that you sprinkle over your thinning areas. The microfiber bonds to your real hair by static electricity and supposedly stays on even in the rain (but washes off with shampoo). This is supposed to work for guys like Al Gore, who have enough hair to start with but want it to look less scarce. In fact, Gersh Kuntzman, author of *Hair! Mankind's Historic Quest to End Baldness*, credits Toppik with helping Gore win the popular vote in 2000. (If only Toppik could also fix our electoral process.) If relying on static electricity makes you nervous, you can try the similarly dorky DermMatch, which comes in a case that looks like eyeliner. It is essentially paint, which you apply to fill in an extra-wide part line. Again, if you don't have enough hair, you'll look pretty foolish. Finally, there are products like Fullmore and GLH, known as "hair in a can." These bonding substances go on your head kind of like spray paint. The downside is that your hair will be a little sticky if someone decides to rub her hands through it. All of these products lie somewhere between shaving your head and wearing a toupee: It's medium desperation.

8. I think I'm ready to shave it all off. Is there anything I should know before I do? >> You are about to enter a

very elite club, a group of men for whom baldness is not a defect but an honor. Yul Brynner said that shaving his dome might have opened doors for him in Hollywood. Charles Barkley says that

head shaving is really just "coming home."

For the best results when kissing it all goodbye, get a HeadBlade. This skull-friendly razor slips onto your finger and has built-in rollers to run smoothly over your head. And the signature series is made of stainless steel that won't rust in the shower. HeadBlade has 2,830 friends on MySpace. How many do you have?

9. I've heard that today's hair-transplant surgery has come a long way from the plugs of the 1980s. Is that true? >> Yes. The reason

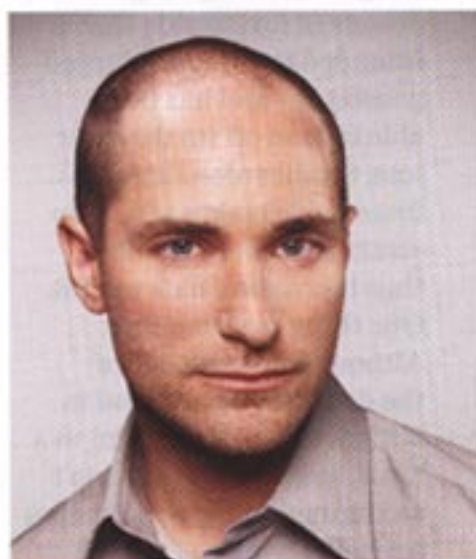
plugs made your head look like a flower bed is that hair follicles were transplanted in big clumps, with each containing about twenty follicles. "Even when they were done aesthetically," says plastic surgeon Jeffrey Epstein, director of the Foundation for Hair Restoration in Miami, "they grew like crops." But by 1995, doctors found that they could divide the donor hair into naturally occurring follicular units containing one to four hairs. The result is much more natural looking, and the surgical process is largely the same. After the doctor removes a donor strip from the back or side of your head (wherever you have enough hair) and divides it into naturally occurring groups of hairs, he pokes tiny holes in the area you're trying to fill. The donor hair gets implanted and within a week or two it falls out, leaving room for new hair to grow. It takes about three months for the new hair to sprout.

The surgery takes anywhere from three to eight hours, during which time you're awake and can even watch movies. And the recovery time is only about a week. (Several companies advertise a quicker recovery time, but be skeptical of these. You'll have scabs where the donor hair is implanted, and many doctors agree that they take a week to heal.) The good news is that there's minimal pain while you're healing, and complications are rare.

10.

I'm losing my hair, but I don't think I'll look good with a shaved head. What are the alternatives to the comb-over?

>> "Nothing is more unsightly than a bald man covered with hair." That's a quote from an Italian poet 2,000 years ago, which means the comb-over has been making outcasts of men for a long time. It's natural to want to make the most of those few strands you have left, but there's a right way to do this and a wrong way. We asked New York City stylist Losi (that's right, just Losi) to give her styling tips for every type of baldness.

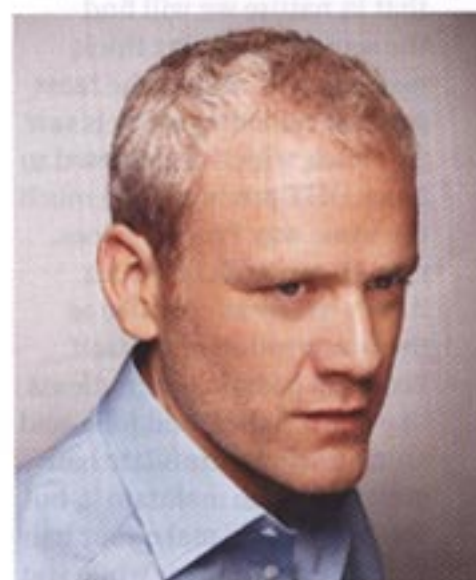


If you're thinning all over:

· Cut your hair close to the scalp. "When the hair is longer, it just lies flat on the head, and you can see the scalp," says Losi. "But when hair is shorter, it looks thicker because the hairs rest on each other and create a fuller effect."

If you're bald on top but have lots of hair on the sides and back:

· No matter how much hair you have on the sides and back, cut it close to the scalp or you'll risk what Losi calls "the Bozo effect." We understand you're tempted to flaunt whatever hair you have, but quantity in just a few areas will only highlight what you're missing up top.



If you're receding from the front:

· A receding hairline is easier to work with than a bald spot on the crown. Losi says you should keep the "tongue"—the area between your receding spots—at least an inch long, especially if you have curly hair.

(THE BODY)

11. Don't hair-transplant procedures cost a fortune?

>> It isn't cheap, but it's not prohibitively expensive, either: On average, prices run \$7 per graft, with the average transplant numbering 1,000 to 3,000 grafts. If you're fairly young when you opt for surgery, keep in mind that this is something you'll likely have to do a couple of times in your life, since your initial surgery won't look natural as you continue to bald.

12. Be honest: If I try this surgery, will it look obvious?

>> Yes and no. It's certainly not as obvious as it was in the past. Kobren cautions, though, that not all outcomes are good, especially if you don't find the right practice. He recommends asking doctors how experienced their technicians are (these are the people who separate the donor

strip into units), because they are as much a part of the process as the doctor is. It's also a good idea to find a cosmetic surgeon to perform the procedure and not just a doctor who has been certified to perform transplants. Cosmetic surgeons are likely to be more concerned with the artistry of the surgery and hiding any scars. And no matter how good the surgeon is, during the weeklong healing period there will be visible swelling and scabs—not stuff you can easily talk your way around (how many "basketball injuries" involve a swollen head?). Wearing a bandanna or hat may help to conceal these side effects but will also raise suspicions. Unless, of course, you were a bandanna guy before the surgery.

13. If I can afford to wait a few years, will I have much

better options for hair surgery? >> Hair cloning is the next generation of hair-restoration treatment, but it's still ten years from being a reality, according to Robert Leonard, founder and chief surgeon of Rhode Island's Leonard Hair Transplant Associates. "Hair cloning involves taking some harvest hair from the donor region and sending it to a lab to have it broken down into stem cells, which will then get replicated and injected into the thinning or bald area," says Leonard. These stem cells will then create follicles from which hair will grow. Cloning will probably first be available somewhere outside the United States.

In the meantime, one experimental noninvasive treatment currently being used is infrared light therapy. A machine called the Luce LDS 100 drenches the patient's head in

infrared light to accomplish three important things: "The device increases the capillary blood flow in the dermis, where the follicles live; it increases cellular activity and oxygen to the dermal papilla, which is the manufacturing center of the follicle; and it converts about 70 percent of hairs from a resting phase to a growing phase," Leonard explains. Generally, treatment costs \$1,750 to \$3,500 and lasts about a year, beginning with sessions twice a week for the first couple of months and ending with once-a-month treatments the last six months. Bottom line: According to Leonard, 90 percent of the people who go under the light can halt the progression of their balding with this treatment. ✪

KYLA JONES is a GQ researcher. Additional reporting by JON FINKEL.

14.

I've always thought of balding as bad. Which guys make it look good?

>> You don't have to be a beauty queen to pull off bald (though it helps...a lot). Check out these guys who rock it bald without apologies.



ZINEDINE ZIDANE
If I grew out zee hair, I'd look like Eddie from zee *Munsters*.



BRUCE WILLIS
I've been rocking a cool shaved head longer than Ashton's been alive.



KEN WATANABE
I'm the last samurai of male-pattern baldness. HI-YAI!



RUDY GIULIANI
I dumped my wife, saved New York, and finally got a good cut. But before...

15.

And which ones just keep bald looking bad?

>> If your dome is winning comparisons to any of these guys, it might be time to make a change.



SAM DONALDSON
That's not a toupee, Mr. President; that's a dead otter.



JOE TORRE
You manage A-Rod. See how you look.



CHRIS BERMAN
You're with me, Rogaine.



RUDY GIULIANI
Would you elect this hair president?