



• Dr Cam Simmons: "The most successful hair transplant is one in which people don't notice you've had one!"

In some instances, our grandmothers didn't really know best.

Take hair loss, for example. How many times have you heard

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your grandmother intone that a good oil massage would give you a head full of thick, glossy hair?

Or that a diet rich in *ghee* and almonds would?

Or that modern-day stresses were causing our hair to fall out?

Well, none of these are true. And it is not just anybody telling you this, but a physician with a background in Family and Emergency Medicine who has not only performed 5,000 hair transplants but has also had a hair transplant himself.

**Dr Cam Simmons** opened the **Canadian Hair Transplant Centre (CHTC)** in 2006 after

having worked as an associate at the Seager Hair Transplant Centre from 1999 to 2005.

He was drawn to the field after getting a hair transplant when he was 28.

"I enjoyed what it gave me. I've always enjoyed the surgical aspect of medicine, and doing hair transplants allows me to help others while being a surgeon and an artist," says Dr Simmons.

Asked if 28 was not kind of young for someone to go in for a hair transplant, he dispels the popular belief that only middle-aged men need one. At his clinic, he sees men in their late 20s to men in their 70s and even 80s.

"Of course, the demand peaks for men in their 30s to 50s and is not that common for men in their 70s and 80s, but we do see them!"

Currently, men outnumber women by eight to one, but that, says Dr Simmons, will change. In

the past, small circles of bald skin were removed and replaced with circles of hair-bearing skin. As women rarely go completely bald, it wasn't seen as something that was really helpful for them.

"Women also have the advantage of longer hair that they can style differently to cover/disguise thinning hair, but current methods of hair transplants work for both men and women. By the age of 50, fifty per cent of men and 40 per cent of women, would have experienced some degree of hair loss."

Much of this, Dr Simmons explains, will be genetic hair loss. Genetic, or hereditary hair loss, does not follow a simple pattern and is not as easy to explain as, say, a baby's brown eyes or blue eyes based on the colour of the parents' eyes. There are many genes involved that can affect different generations to different degrees.

Stress, diet, etc., do not really have a big impact on the most

Think of the human hair follicle as a little factory that makes hair. Each hair grows for two to six years and then falls out. The follicle then rests for a bit and then grows another hair. We normally shed 100 hair a day. What happens with genetic hair loss is that the new hair grows for a shorter period. For one to two years, instead of the two to six. And then, perhaps for six to nine months. So in effect, one loses more hair than is growing back.

There's not a lot that one can do for genetic hair loss.

"There are many so-called remedies out there, but only two, finasteride and minoxidil, have been proven to slow down hair loss. And even those can't generate new growth on bald areas," says Dr Simmons.

And oil massages really do not help?

"Not in genetic hair loss, no. Because hair loss is such a common problem and because people would really like to have a good

## Hair we grow again!

common type of hair loss, androgenic alopecia, otherwise known as male pattern baldness and female pattern baldness. It is a universal condition and affects all races with all hair types. Over 95 per cent of hair loss sufferers have genetic hair loss.

The other kind of hair loss, telogen effluvium – that you and I might refer to as "I am shedding like crazy!" – the one in which one might find lots of hair on the brush, in the sink or in the shower, can be seen after major surgery or in women after childbirth, and can also be related to stress. Thyroid disease can cause loss of hair, as well.

"Usually, if the cause is remedied, hair that is shed will grow back in cases of telogen effluvium," says Dr Simmons. "But in androgenic alopecia, each generation of hair grows lighter, thinner and for a shorter period of time."

head of hair, they will try anything. I've had people come in and say they were told that if a cow licked their hair, it would grow back. This, of course, is nonsense!"

As Dr Simmons himself found, the one thing that works for sure is a hair transplant. He says it is economical in the long run and there's a lot less maintenance involved.

Though the CHTC does get referrals from physicians, anyone can call to make an appointment.

When they call, prospective clients are asked introductory questions to determine whether hair transplant is indeed an option. At the first session, apart from getting a brief medical background and examining the scalp, Dr Simmons looks at the causes of baldness in each case.

"We discuss options such as medication to slow hair loss, etc. We don't offer wigs, but that's an