



Truth about Hair Loss

More than the aesthetics, losing hair is a common health concern. In the region, it's becoming more and more prevalent. AW speaks to Lars Skjøth, founder of the Hårklinikken group of clinics, a series of hair restoration specialised facilities located in Denmark, Germany, the US and now also Dubai, in order to understand everything you need to know about hair loss.

Back in 1989 there were very few treatments available for hair loss; Lars Skjøth discovered through studies and interviews with hundreds of men and women suffering from hair loss that this problem was massive. There was not much material available on the subject and the different categories of hair loss were not very well described in the literature yet. Since then he made it his aim to help people with hair loss disorders. "I opened my first clinic in 1992 in Copenhagen and I have never regretted it," he told *AW*.

After having many clients from the GCC region coming to his Hårklinikken clinics in Denmark, Germany and USA, he decided to visit the region and the first stop was Dubai. He understood that Dubai is a modern day melting pot of different cultures and nationalities where many appreciate quality and uncompromising levels of service that at Hårklinikken have as its core value. Using the Dubai clinic as a base, it will consult clients across the entire region and also will be opening other clinics within the GCC in the near future. "Our treatment model has proved a huge success in Europe and USA and we are pleased to be present with our clinic in Jumeirah," he furthered.

Why is it important to take care of hair, particularly the scalp? Over the aesthetic needs, how does it affect the overall health of the body?

It is not a physiological necessity to care for hair or scalp – naturally you can survive

without good hair and/or scalp – but from what I have experienced, for most women, young and old, hair seems to be the 'crown' and hair has a great symbolic value – especially in the Middle East. So psychologically many women that we meet feel amputated when their hair is reduced to much less than it used to be. They feel that is an attack on their femininity and on the way they picture themselves and this can cause unnecessary stress and worry that we can take away when we provide the correct customised solution for these women to get their hair back.

What are the common problems your patients from this region encounter?

Hair loss and thinning of hair are more extensive in the Middle East, and in the UAE, than in other regions. In the Gulf region, more than 50% of men over 25 years already have thinning hair. Both types of hair loss can be effectively cured by the treatments we offer.

Men and women alike experience hair thinning although hair loss patterns differ from men to women and male pattern hair loss is more visible, because it is more concentrated in specific areas, like the temples and crown, whereas women can lose hair all over the head at the same time and often do not notice until 20 – 50% of the hair has been lost over longer or shorter periods of time. With men it often progresses faster and therefore becomes more visible faster.

Water, sunlight and heat can certainly play a role with regards to the hair's look. The

hair shaft is made up of dead, hard protein called keratin in three layers. The outer layer is the cuticle formed by tightly packed scales in an overlapping structure similar to roof shingles. Bad water quality, sun and heat from more old fashioned flattening irons and hair dryers affect the cuticle and make the hair look more damaged. There are pigment cells that are distributed throughout the cortex and medulla (mid layers of the hair) giving the hair its characteristic colour and this is also altered by sunlight and bad water – containing high levels of chemicals, causing bleaching of the hair.

There are no official comprehensive statistics yet, but I have done four years of research on different circumstances and conditions relating to public health in the UAE region and I have seen approximately 3000 patients in the UAE. I have compared this information with stats from our five clinics in Germany, two clinics in Denmark and the seven clinics in Florida/USA and have concluded several things.

- People have a poorer diet which may influence general health and hormone imbalances that can lead to hair loss and thinning.
- Water can have an impact on the hair quality, breakage of hair and lack of lustre.
- Drinking liquids that lack vital organic minerals
- The social and personal importance of hair is greater in the Middle East than in Europe and the USA

What are the most alarming cases you've experienced from your patients, so far? How did you manage to treat them?

The most alarming cases that we have seen are children and young adults. Most were experiencing considerable amounts of thinning hair which was quite difficult for them to handle because their peers were not suffering from the same problem, and that made them feel different.

We had a case in our Dubai clinic where a young girl from the UAE aged 16, came to the clinic. She had lost approximately 75% of her hair since she was 12, which we see quite often. She had already tried many treatments in UAE – all of which had promised a lot but none of them had offered her any results. When she came for a 6 months follow-up she had regained almost all her hair back and her mother, father, brother and sisters joined her and it was wonderful to experience how much difference it had made to the young girl's





life and how much the family had been backing her and understanding how important it was for her. She said to us, 'you gave me my life back – I feel like me again', and her mother told me that she had started interacting with her schoolmates again, something she had not done for many years, all because of her hair problem.

What are the usual causes of hair loss or scalp problems?

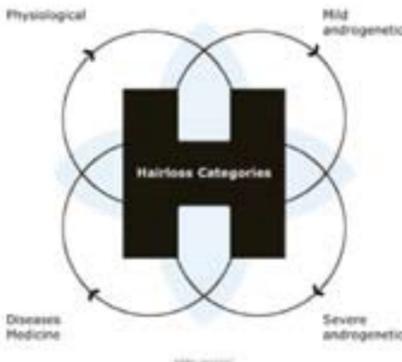
Several different conditions can affect the scalp, and those conditions can be itchy or irritating and cause dandruff which is an excess of dead skin flakes shedding from the scalp. The cause of the excess skin can come from a mild form of seborrheic dermatitis, but in addition to scaly skin flakes, a person with more severe forms of seborrheic dermatitis of the scalp will have reddening of the skin. Excessive sebum from the oil glands of the skin (particularly the scalp and face) is a key feature, giving the skin a greasy look and feel. It is particularly common in people with oily skin or hair.

The most common cause of hair loss is a hereditary/hormonal condition called male-pattern baldness or female-pattern baldness or androgenetic hair loss. It is called a pattern because this type of hair loss develops in patterns from the interaction between genetic and hormonal factors. In genetically-susceptible people, certain sex hormones trigger a particular pattern of permanent hair loss.

Many think that they can merely look at their father or mother and determine how their hair will develop but this is not the case. At a minimum they would have to look at a grandfather or grandmother,

and their families, in order to establish something.

There are also several non-genetic factors that may influence hair loss. This category I have named physiological hair loss. Hair loss problems in this category might come from stress and many of the things that come with stress – i.e. bad sleep and poor diet. Also, the lack of certain nutrients and bad water quality from the shower and drinking water, hair styling products and more may speed up the process.



As you can see below – we divide hair loss into four categories.

Physiological hair loss

This type of hair loss can be caused by stress, malnutrition, anaemia, scalp disorders, bad water quality, hair product chemicals, hair straighteners, hair extensions, hair pulling and more.

Mild androgenetic hair loss

This is the most common type of hair loss for men and women and is also known as hereditary hair loss. At this stage, the

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hair follicles are still active and we are able to reverse the hair loss process, improve the hair quality and stabilise the hair with an individualised product treatment customised for each patient.

Advanced androgenetic hair loss

It is also known as hereditary hair loss but at a more advanced stage. This category of hair loss is more common in men but also occurs in women, and here the Harklinikken hair transplantation methods would be recommended if the patient is a candidate for this.

Hair loss caused by disease and/or medication

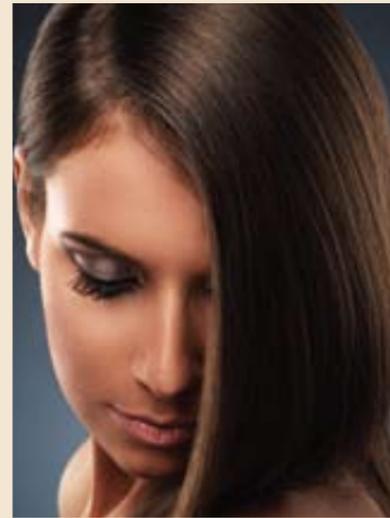
Clients suffering from a disease that is directly or indirectly causing hair loss are normally not good candidates for treatment and are often referred to another specialist outside the realm of Harklinikken.

It is thought that it is most common in men but my studies show that women suffer almost as much as men but in most cases it develops in a less aggressive manner and I different patterns.

Once treated, what are the ways you recommend so as the previous hair problems won't be repeated?

Each of our client's treatments, products and advice are customised to fit their particular situation so that each individual can avoid further problems in the future. The treatments and advice vary quite a bit but there are some general tips.

Avoid Hair Loss – Follow these tips!



A greater part of the people living in Gulf region could improve their hair a bit with some lifestyle changes.

Living the UAE climate can be tough on the hair itself. Sun exposure, heat, humidity and chemicals from water have influence on the hairs condition, but these are not the only things that might have a negative influence on the hairs quality and look. Here are a few good tips:

-Plan well so you stress less! Stress is literally one of the biggest killers because it often leads to other bad things like bad eating habits because you don't have time to cook or eat well and often people who smoke, drink coffee and/or alcohol will do this more when stressed out and often their sleeping patterns are disturbed. This vicious circle is a major stress factor for the organism and for the hair, since lack of nutrients and increased levels of certain stress hormones in the body can severely increase hair loss which could have been avoided if there was less stress. One of the best ways to reduce stress is first of all to acknowledge that there is a problem and secondly to identify where. Often a greater part of being stressed can be overcome by being very organised and planning well since you will have an overview of what you are doing when and it is easier to say 'no – I am busy on Monday from 10 to 11:30' so that things do not build up.

-Eat balanced food containing right amounts of protein, carbohydrates, fatty

acids and water as imbalances can cause disturbance in all body mechanisms – so make sure that you have good variation in your food intake as a lack of certain nutrients can cause problems with the hair.

-If you are thinking of losing weight or if you are already on a diet – make sure you are not losing too much weight in a short period of time as this leads to big hormonal changes in your system that can result in hair loss. Crash diets are unhealthy but instead you should go for a healthy diet over a longer period of time and the weight loss is this way more stable and so is your hormone system and your mood.

-Wash your hair often with shampoo without perfume, colour and problematic preservatives. It has been said that it is not good to wash your hair too often as it strips the hair and scalp from its natural oils but when washing with the correct shampoo for your hair it is not a problem to wash daily or every alternate day. At Harklinikken we advise clients on how often they should wash and with what shampoo, and also how to take care of their hair and scalp in general.

-For women: do not put your hair up too tight – make sure it is slightly loose at a minimum. Hair loss from pulling causes scarring in the hair follicles and can result in permanent hair loss.

-When colouring hair, try to keep it to the hair and not the scalp (which is why it is called hair colour and not scalp colour). Several hair colour products contain a number of chemicals not suitable for contact with skin and scalp, like Paraphenyldiamine (PPD) and several others. If you get a severe allergic reaction it can result in eczema and severe hair loss.

-Don't drink coffee after 4 PM in order to ensure deeper sleep that result in better hormone balance, better metabolism, more energy and this way more optimal circumstances for a healthy hair and scalp.

-Exercise minimum two to three times a week since this increases general health and hormone balance which optimises hair health as well.

-Water, sunlight and heat from the weather, hair dryers and flattening irons can certainly play a role with regards to the hair's appearance. So, cover the hair from sunlight and get a water-filter for your shower to reduce the damage done to your hair from chemicals in the water, like chlorine. If you use a blow dryer – do it as

little as possible since it is not only the heat but the electrical output from the blow dryer that damages the hair.

-If you use styling products, make sure to carefully apply it to the hair and avoid contact with scalp since most styling products are loaded with chemical components where long term exposure can cause contact allergies, eczema and potential harmful effect on the organism.

-Hair extensions can cause serious permanent damage to hair. Some types of hair extensions cause less damage than others. Avoid the type that are woven/ braided into your existing hair and avoid the ones that can be clipped with a curved metal clip that you have to bend when you attach it to your own hair as both types cause permanent scars in the areas where they are attached after a period of time – and no hair will grow again in such scars.

-Dark hair are more prone to damage from sun!

The darker your hair is the more light it absorbs whereas blonde or white hair is at the opposite end of the scale. Black or dark brown hairs ability to absorb light results in a relatively larger portion of the light energy to be transferred to the hair, which causes the molecules to vibrate faster. This in turn means that temperature rises as heat is really just movement among the smallest particles. The conclusion is that dark hair – even though it is stronger than blonde hair types are more prone to be dried out and damaged from sun exposure and should be protected with a scarf or a hat – preferably a light coloured one.

-Hair pulling

Do not pull your hair back too tight but make sure it is always slightly loose and do not pull out grey hairs. Hair loss from pulling can cause scarring in the hair follicles and can lead to permanent hair loss.

-Fungal infections can be avoided

Make sure that your hair is completely dry before putting it up to avoid scalp problems like fungal infections which can also influence hair quality in a negative way.

-Losing hair is not really a problem as we all exchange old hair with new ones every day, some periods more than others, which is part of the hair life cycle. The problem however starts when you realise that the new hair are thinner in quality and/or amount because this means that your hair has started a thinning process that might continue unless you do something about it.