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Healthier Hair From A Laser?



Reporting **Mary Ann Childers**

CHICAGO (CBS) — What if you could stop thinning hair and maybe even re-grow it without surgery or drugs? CBS 2's medical editor Mary Ann Childers looks at a new treatment that's showing promise in producing healthier hair.

Judy noticed her hair was thinning a few years ago; she tried shampoos and conditioners to thicken it up, but nothing really worked.

"My hair was breaking easily and it was falling out, she said.

So she volunteered to test something new. For the past four months, she's sat once or twice a week for 30 minutes, under what looks like a hair dryer. But instead of hot air, the helmet of the dryer exposes her scalp to low-level laser light. There's no hear, no pain, no down time.

"About one-third of our patients are saying that they're having less loss of hair, they're having increased density of hair and increased hair growth," said plastic surgeon Dr. Steven Dayan.

Dayan believes it stimulates the metabolism of hair follicle cells and increases blood flow in the scalp. It appears to have no side effects.

"It seems to work better for females or women with thinning hair, than males who already have hair loss," Dayan said.

Hair is something a lot of people take for granted until it's gone.

"You could loose 50 percent of your hair without knowing that the hair is gone," said Dr. Alan Bauman, a hair restoration surgeon. "And all of a sudden when you hit that 50 percent break point, wow, then it starts to look thin."

In men, the cause is mostly genetic. In women, it's not so well understood. But childbirth and hormones can play a part. There are FDA-approved treatments that can slow, or potentially stop hair loss. But low-level lasers, while not a miracle cure, may be another option.

"Lasers are really there to maintain the hair that you have, to improve the quality of your existing hair," Bauman said.

But Judy is sold, and plans to continue treatments when the study is over.

"The hair is fuller, shinier, stronger; less hair falls out like 90 percent on me," Judy said.

Because it's still being tested, doctors can't say yet how many treatments are needed; for how long, or what happens if you stop -- the cost will likely range from \$100 to \$350 a session.

The laser treatment is not yet FDA-approved. So far, there is only one low-level laser, a comb device that received FDA approval last year.

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