



THRIVING WITH HAIR LOSS

Solutions for those experiencing hair loss

By

Peggy Knight,

founder and president of

Peggy Knight Wigs

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I dedicate this book to my oldest and dearest friend Kathy Hale. Kathy held me up when I was down and revealed my successes. She was the inspiration behind the charity "Locks of Love". She is and has always been my support system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge Ashley Siegel, founder of the National Alopecia Areata Foundation, for opening my eyes and making me believe in myself—with or without hair.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peggy Knight Wigs is the leading provider of hair prostheses for medical hair loss. Peggy's personal experience with hair loss is her inspiration and motivation. It is the foundation for her goals and actions today and every day. As a teenager, Peggy developed alopecia areata, an autoimmune disease that causes hair loss and has no known cause or cure. By age 21, she had lost all of her hair. She was then working in a high-visibility position as a flight attendant and struggled to maintain her self-esteem in the face of society's expectations. At the time, there was little understanding of, and little compassion for, individuals experiencing hair loss or thinning because of alopecia areata or other medical causes (such as stress, chemotherapy, or scars). The marketplace offered little solace: acceptable wig and hairpiece products were almost impossible to locate. In an effort to help herself and others, Knight founded an image institute in 1982. This institute, located in San Francisco, California, focused on helping women regain their self-esteem and return to a normal, active lifestyle after experiencing changes in their physical appearance due to alopecia areata, other hair loss diseases, burns, or cancer treatments. The institute also nurtured the development of the high-quality hairpieces and wigs now available through Peggy Knight Wigs. Today, as Founder and President of Peggy Knight Wigs, Peggy oversees the research and development of a full product line of wigs and custom hairpieces created specifically for girls, teens and women with medical hair loss.

"I am committed to creating hair prostheses that enable everyone experiencing hair loss to lead a normal life – to walk in the wind or play sports without worry," says Peggy. In her quest to help people through hair loss, Peggy Knight has been designing her signature wigs for over 35 years. She is a world-renowned expert on the subject of hair loss in women and has appeared on many programs and in many publications. Peggy's concepts have been seen on:

 CNN

 The Oprah Winfrey Show

 20/20

 The New Maury Povich Show

-  Dermatology Nurses
-  Nursing Magazine
-  Hair & Beauty News
-  Modern Salon
-  Beauty Education
-  American Salon
-  Entrepreneurial Woman
-  San Francisco Chronicle
-  Oakland Tribune
-  Los Angeles Times
-  Gayle King Show
-  People Magazine
-  Extra
-  Today Show
-  Cosmopolitan Magazine
-  Hour Magazine
-  Dr. Dean Edell
-  Telemundo Television
-  Nickelodeon Television
-  The Courage to Give
-  The Tyra Banks Show

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"I watched in horror as my first strand of hair fell to the floor. The slow shedding soon gave way to rapid loss of hair, leaving me looking like a dog with mange.

Today, I have beautiful, shiny, youthful hair that stays put without the use of tape or glue thanks to my beautiful new hairpiece. My dream came full circle as I sat in the salon chair only days later after receiving my new hair. New hair, new me.

After facing the trauma of hair loss, myself, I have dedicated my life to helping women experiencing hair loss. I've walked in your shoes and know your pain. Let me guide you through the maze to find your own way."

CHAPTER ONE

Going, Going, Gone

Hair loss was not in my realm of consideration. No child should have to be tested with such a loss.

Flip through the pages of a fashion magazine, click through the channels on TV and count the number of hair care product ads showcasing stunning models with flowing, silky, shiny hair. What messages are these advertisements selling?

In our culture, hair is associated with beauty, youth and sexuality. Now, imagine watching these images flash before your eyes, knowing that once, maybe not so long ago, you weren't bald.

When I started to lose my hair as a child, my first experience seeing a doctor seemed like the end of the world. I felt hopeless: as if I were doomed to be bald forever. Looking back on my own experience has given me the perspective to help countless women experiencing hair loss.

At the tender age of 14, I learned more about Alopecia Areata than any teenage girl needs to know. As the disease grabbed hold of my life, squeezed it, twisted it and spat it out, I was left to find my own way. After 45 years of dealing with this medical hair loss condition, I am now here to share my story with you. You will read about the emotions I experienced, the coping methods I developed and the solutions I created. You will read about how it felt, from the discovery of the first falling strand to the loss of all body hair.

The emotions I describe are not unique to me. They are shared by almost anyone who suffers from the shock of medical hair loss. No one is exempt from the emotional roller coaster that this life-altering condition brings. By sharing my experience with you, it is my hope that you won't feel alone. Many thousands of men, women and children have traveled this road before us. I have walked the path, blazed the trail and cleared the way so you can have an easier journey. I am here to tell you that there is life after hair loss.

My story spans over five decades, covering all the stages of loss. My goal in writing this book is to empower and educate women to know their options and to feel whole and beautiful again. I don't want you to walk away feeling doomed by hair loss. It is a completely unpredictable condition – and I have known many clients who have regrown their hair. We are thrilled when this happens, because regrowth is a major cause for celebration. Whether you have thinning hair, chemotherapy-induced loss, self-inflicted loss or alopecia areata hair loss, this book is for you.

CHAPTER TWO

The Day of Discovery

Finding that first spot is devastating as a young girl.

I had been trying to cover up hair loss for fifteen years when I discovered that I didn't have to put up with hiding under wraps or bad wigs that threatened to expose my bald head at any moment. At the age of thirty, I found out about a revolutionary hair replacement solution—at that point available only in Europe—that used a silicone grip instead of tape or elastic to secure hairpieces to one's head. It actually worked. Security was my new friend.

For years, I had been creating my own wigs that actually looked natural. Now, finally, I had a foolproof way to keep them on my head. That's when I realized that I'd found my calling. I had to share this answer to hair loss with the millions of girls, teens and women who still suffered the way I had. I could improve their lives just as instantly and profoundly as I had improved my own. And, with a natural head of hair that didn't constantly threaten to pop off or make their heads ache, they could once again feel as normal as I now did.

I'd traveled a long, tough road to get to that place in my life. I learned about hair loss at the age when other girls were exploring hair styles.

Losing one's hair is never easy, a fact that millions know all too well. But it's devastating when you're a youngster who's enthralled with hair. As a girl and then a young teen, my dark, curly hair—a byproduct of my Italian heritage—was not only my pride and joy, it was my obsession. At age ten, I made what could very well have been the world's very first highlight by creating a tiny fall out of silvery thread, attaching it to a bobby pin and then blending it in with my own hair.

During the next few years, my girlfriends and I would spend hours in front of the mirror experimenting with new 'dos. My dad would pound on the bathroom door, saying "Hurry up girls, you've been in there for hours!" He was right – but after all, we were fussing over our hair, and that was just *what girls did*. Great hair made us feel, well, great. Conversely, of course, bad hair days made us feel terrible – and not just about our hair.

I remember vividly the day my mother gave me a home permanent wave right before my First Holy Communion. She meant well, but the result was the perm from hell! Nothing could calm down the frizz, and I was sure that my life was ruined forever. As all of my girlfriends were leaving home in their white dresses and veils the following morning, I curled up on my bed and sobbed. I hated my hair and wanted to hide away forever. Instead, my parents sent me off to church to face the humiliation. I'm pretty sure that I burned all of the photos of that holy day. As I look back on that hair-related incident that once seemed to be the end of the world, I realize that the perm was a subtle preparation for what lay ahead. The day would come when I would long for even those frizzy locks I once hated.

As I brushed my hair in preparation for my fourteenth birthday party, I felt a smooth patch on the side of my head. Where was the hair that was supposed to be there? In a panic, I ran into the living room to show my parents. "What happened? What happened?" I cried. "Look at my hair!"

The round bald spot was the size of a quarter. I didn't know what had caused it, but I knew something was very wrong. I sat down and cried. Despite their alarm, my parents decided to give my hair time to re-grow before rushing me off the doctor. That seemed like a good call, because in a short period of time, fuzz covered the smooth surface. All was forgotten... until a second spot appeared on the other side of my head. And then another, and another. The spots seemed to have a life of their own. As one began sprouting new hair and filling in, another grew even larger and balder.

Thus began a cruel yo-yo process of having my hair grow and fall and grow and fall. It would actually have been easier if my hair had all fallen out immediately. If it was going to come out, let it come out. If it was going to grow, let it grow. But no: every day was a different story. Eventually, the spots started to appear more and more frequently. So instead of one spot on the side of my head, there would be two that would grow to the point where they merged together to form a figure-eight.

Eventually, it became clear that my hair was falling out faster than it was growing in. By the age of twenty-four, I was completely bald.

CHAPTER THREE

Wigging out

I was desperate to find a wig that would conceal the fact that I was losing—and then had lost—my hair. I would have to fashion my own to finally obtain a natural look.

Shortly after I had lost my first patch of hair, my petite, beautiful mother developed a bald spot of her own, which simply grew larger as others developed. Within six months, she had lost all of her waist-long hair, along with all the rest of the hair on her body. Questions began to race through my mind: *Is this what I have to look forward to? What could have caused this hair loss? Do I have a strange disease that I share with my mother? Is our nutrition lacking, or are we using the wrong shampoo?*

I would later discover that there are many medical conditions that cause hair loss—ranging from disease and stress to genetics and aging. Scar tissue from burns; trauma to the scalp from excessive hair pulling (whether from a tight ponytail or compulsive behavior); chemotherapy and radiation; malnutrition (whether chronic or caused by a crash diet); hormone imbalances; sometimes even the environment can trigger hair loss. Some of these conditions, like stress, cause only temporary hair loss. In other cases, the loss is permanent. Diagnostic tests, which I'll discuss in Chapter Four, may help you zero in on abnormalities contributing to hair thinning. In my case, I didn't have to look past my mother to conclude that those genetics had something to do with my condition, which would eventually be diagnosed as alopecia areata.

I remember my first wig buying experience. Unlike today, wig shops were nonexistent, but after an extensive search, we finally found a department store that offered wigs for sale. The entire family piled into the car and we drove to the city. Out on a table sat an array of wigs in different colors and lengths. I was immediately drawn to a long, very dark brown hairpiece. Where can I try it on? Does it fit? Is this the right color? With no privacy or mirrors available, I resorted to a broom closet and a compact mirror. (To this day, I shudder at those memories.) We bought it and hurried back home so I could style it to my liking.

Well, in my early days of wig-buying, the hair was not prepared as it is today. I was unable to wash the hair, as this would make it tangle. Vapon dry cleaning solution was the way to clean hair wigs back then, so I had the constant clinging odor of a busy dry cleaner's shop. Nevertheless, I had hair on my head and it did not fall off. It was a blessing that hair style fashions were big and puffy in those early days, because that is

exactly what I had perched on my head: a big 60s bouffant style. Today, thankfully, fashionable hair is much more natural and big hair is out.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fear of Exposure

Like so many of my clients, inadequate hair replacement solutions forced compromises in every aspect of my life. Eventually, I just stopped living a good part of my life.

As a teenager with hair loss, my primary concern quickly became hiding my increasingly bare head from the rest of the world. I had no idea how to cover up the four-inch diameter bald spot on the top of my head, along with the others that had cropped up, for school picture day. I took mental notes as our local hair stylist somehow managed to create something out of nothing. Before long, all of the spots had been camouflaged and I was ready for my close up. The artfully-created look might have been unusual, but at least I didn't look hairless.

The difficult task of cosmetically concealing my growing baldness took longer and longer as I had less and less hair to work with. I would spend huge amounts of time teasing my remaining hair and using hairspray to hold the style in place. The night of my senior prom, I was supposed to be picked up at 6:30pm for dinner, but as afternoon turned to evening, my hairstyle was still a work in progress. This time, I was forced to add in a hairpiece, which I attached to my remaining hair with dozens of bobby pins. The fake hair blended with my own, but my entire head was so heavily doused with hairspray that it had a lacquered finish. With just thirty minutes left on the clock, I finally completed my up-do (and I use the word literally) and had just enough time to slip on my dress and make up my face. At the prom, I had to walk—and dance—like I had a book on my head because, with the slightest tip, the entire coif tilted. But I made it! That wouldn't always be the case.

As my hair loss progressed, first eyebrow pencil and then scalp crayons and hair additions were incorporated into my routine. I longed for those days when I was able to get up, wash my hair and run out the door. What used to take five minutes – unless I was fooling around with hair styles – now routinely took about an hour from start to finish, with much of that time spent in frustration and tears.

Eventually, things got to the point where my hair was so thin that I couldn't cover the bald spots with hair. By high school, I had already started wearing scarves to cover the missing patches of hair, and they became my trademark. Each scarf matched the outfit

of the day: not difficult, because my mother or I made most of my clothes by hand. Unfortunately, the school had a dress code that prohibited head coverings. The principal and most of the teachers knew about my situation, so my scarves were approved. On one occasion, however, I was confronted by a substitute teacher who ordered me to remove my scarf in front of the entire class. Profoundly humiliated, I bolted out of the classroom and headed home. That afternoon, my parents visited the school and the teacher apologized to me the next day. The gesture, however well-intentioned, could not erase the pain and embarrassment that had been inflicted.

Scarves quickly became a mainstay of my wardrobe at home and on the road. I had one in every color and material. They were stashed in my purse, glove compartment, next to the bed, in my gym bag and in my suitcase. All the while, I never knew when a big wind might blow, leaving me bareheaded.

Hats were also a good cover-up for bald spots and they prevented the wind from totally devastating a hairstyle that took me hours to create. Accordingly, I made sure to have one for every occasion: casual hats, sports hats and dress hats, in all colors, styles and fabrics. My style efforts, however, did nothing to stem the lack of self-esteem caused by my hair loss.

CHAPTER FIVE

Locks of Love

I am thrilled for the young children who receive Locks of Love wigs.

By then, simply making it from day to day was an emotional balancing act. Despite a condition that had upended my life and self-confidence, I did not receive much family support or nurturing as a child, so I had to go outside my family network to find solace. When my hair began to fall out, my best friend Kathy was the most supportive influence in my life. She always stuck up for me and even got into a fist fight with one of the boys who took every possible opportunity to call me “baldy.” And when my parents refused to acknowledge my need for a wig, Kathy helped me fund—and find—my first wig.

Kathy’s help didn’t stop there. One day about twenty years ago, she announced that she was growing her hair so that I could create a custom wig for myself. I didn’t quite grasp the concept at the time, but over the months as her hair got longer and longer, the act of love she was offering became increasingly apparent. When her hair finally got so long that it was driving her crazy, she announced that it was time to chop it off. We scheduled a styling appointment, with a photographer on hand to document the hair cutting.

Little did we know that this would prove to be the first of many such events. That act of generosity prompted us to found Locks of Love, a charity that has since provided natural hairpieces to thousands of financially disadvantaged children all over the world suffering from hair loss.

Self-esteem is vital to all of us, but it’s critical to kids and young adults. Over the years, I’ve watched faces change when I put hairpieces on heads. Those kids not only brighten up, they stand up! Young women who feel bad about themselves have the worst posture in the world. When they first come in to see me, their shoulders are rounded and they look at the floor instead of up at me. But after I put a fabulous head of hair on their head, they walk out tall and bouncing, their hair flying.

I saw that renewed bounce again and again with Locks of Love: first during the ten years that Kathy and I gave away hairpieces to children before filing for nonprofit status, then in the years that followed, as the organization garnered global fame. Thanks to

media attention, children who were unable to afford natural hair wigs began sending in applications by the hundreds, and girls from all over the world began sending us the ponytails they'd purposefully grown. Soon we outgrew our offices and had to schedule volunteers to handle the volume of phone calls and e-mails we received.

Reading the letters from the children who lovingly cut and donated their hair proved the most rewarding part of the Locks of Love program. Some came from girls as young as three. They wrote in crayon and drew pictures of little girls with bald heads. These letters often brought tears to our eyes.

Although I am no longer actively involved in the operations of Locks of Love, my company continues to receive donations of hair, which we turn into wigs for children in need. And Kathy continues to remind me of how the idea for the charity arose. As I ran my hands through her hair one day, I said: "I wish I had your hair." She said: "You can."

I am proud of my best friend Kathy Hale for being the inspiration behind Locks of Love, and so thankful for the good work of the volunteers and the children all over the country who selflessly cut their hair to benefit others in need. Most of all, I am thrilled for the young children who receive these wigs. For more information about Locks of Love, visit www.locksoflove.org.

CHAPTER SIX

Search for a Cure

There had to be a better way. My search for a way to stop my hair loss, however, got out of control. And that prompted me to find a solution—rather than a cure—for hair loss.

My mother's hair was already falling out when I started losing mine. She went from having a full head of hair to being completely bald in six months. Questions began to race through my mind. Is this what I have to look forward to? What could have

caused this hair loss? Do I have a strange disease? Is my nutrition lacking, or am I using the wrong shampoo?

Our search for a cure started with a visit to our family physician and lasted for almost ten years. We were sure that our hair

loss could be easily explained, and certain that the doctor would just prescribe a pill to stop the hair loss. Much to our surprise and horror, he knew we had alopecia areata, but didn't know the cause or cure. Our doctor told us that our condition was thought to be caused by stress. We had no idea what he meant by this. I had nothing to be stressed about, except the bald spots that were growing in size on my head. He was partially right: the more hair I lost, the more

stress I felt. Still, the question remained: Which came first, the stress or the baldness? We were referred to a San Francisco dermatologist who specializes in alopecia areata. We were convinced that a specialist would have the

answer, so off to the city we went. I remember crying my heart out during the ride. I felt so alone and isolated. No one, not even my family, could understand what I was going through. The tears came from a place in the pit of my stomach, so deep I felt like I could die.

The dermatologist explained that it is quite rare for two members of the same family to be afflicted with alopecia areata. While this was interesting information, all we wanted to know was how to

cure this strange disease. Although quite knowledgeable about the condition, the dermatologist did not have a cure for us. It was too hard to imagine, especially at the age of 14, that a condition existed for which a doctor could not provide the

cure.

Our family hair stylist offered us her idea for a cure: an ultraviolet rake. When it was plugged in, it was lavender, smelled like burning electricity, and made the sound of a bug zapper. I was not sure what this device was supposed

to do for me, but everyone believed it would stimulate hair growth. I sat for hours under the machine, praying that it would work, but my hair continued to fall out.

Cortisone creams were the next course of treatment. We applied it twice a

day to the scalp, which also meant I had to wash my hair twice a day. With each washing, I watched in despair as more of my remaining hair trickled down the drain. To this day, I am unable to look into a drain without feeling the ache from those early years of my hair

loss. I can't tell you if the cortisone cream worked, but I can tell you that I was glad to see it go. I looked and felt greasy, and the creams left a mess on my towels and pillowcases.

As my hair loss accelerated, the doctors started me on a

series of cortisone shots that were administered directly into the scalp. These painful monthly shots kept the alopecia at bay, at least for a while. As the spots grew in size, though, the number of shots increased, and soon the doctor was using

multiple needles. The pain was unbearable and left me with excruciating headaches. I would drive home in tears, feeling so sorry for myself. Yet again, there was no regrowth.

Soon the shots stopping working as well, so I graduated to

intralesional injections. For many years I took these treatments hoping for a complete cure. They did slow down the loss for a while, but my hair never grew back completely. I was playing cortisone roulette. I went from one doctor to

another like a junkie. At one point, a doctor had the sense to figure out my game and cut me off, explaining the dangers of prolonged cortisone steroid use. But I didn't care about the long-term effects. I only cared about regrowth. I desperately

wanted *hair*, and if it meant taking a drug that might be harmful in the future, then so be it. This program failed me as well.

My next visit was to an endocrinologist to have my thyroid tested. It turned out that I did have an underactive

thyroid, so the doctor prescribed medication. I thought I had finally found the answer, and was sure that my hair would start growing back any day. I waited and waited... for regrowth that never happened.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Holy Sutures

I thought I had found the holy grail of answers. A wig sutured to my head was the biggest headache of my alopecia journey.

One day while in Hawaii, my home for seven years, I saw a commercial for a permanent solution to baldness. A man wearing a wig dove into the pool, swam across, came out and shook his wet hair.

It didn't move! I found out later he had his wig sutured to his head.

This was my answer! If I had my hair permanently attached to my head with sutures, my wig would not fly off in the

Hawaiian Tradewinds and ,surely I would be secure at last. Off I marched to see the doctor, and days later I was prepped for surgery. Long running stitches around the perimeter of my head were used as

an attachment for my wig. It was days before the headache subsided. Each and every suture entry and exit point was swollen and painful. The infection from the wig bacteria

took literally years to heal. I was too embarrassed to go to see a doctor for fear of exposing my secret: I was bald.

After enduring this misery for several years, I noticed my wig was turning red in color. Again, too embarrassed to see a trained stylist or colorist, I decided to dye it myself. (Please brace

yourself, gentle reader: this part of the story is not pretty.)

I bought a box of Lady Clairol, read the instructions and headed for the shower. The second the peroxide hit my open oozing sutures, the

excruciating pain began. I slumped down in the shower crying and wishing I would die. My best friend picked me up and took me to the emergency hospital, where an ER doctor looked at

me in horror. His exact words were: "Who did this to you? You are lucky this infection did not go into your brain".

As the doctor removed my sutures, I cried: not only from the overwhelming pain, but because it felt as though my security was being cut away. To this day, almost 50 years later, I still have the scars on my head from those sutures.

This harrowing experience is what catapulted me into the world of wigs. If I was so desperate to have hair that would not blow off my head that I was prepared to undergo such massive risk and pain, I was not alone. After 35 years of working with women with hair loss, I have learned that the only

two things important to them are 1) security and 2) a natural look. In my attempt to have both, I almost lost my life. I vowed at that time that no one should EVER have to go through what I did to have hair. As a result of this vow, my first company was born: Knight and Day Hair Products.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Finding a Solution

Acceptance of my condition didn't mean acceptance of the status quo when it came to hair loss. When I finally found the answer to my own hair loss challenge, I knew I needed to start a business to help the thousands of people out there who were suffering just like me.

As a flight attendant, my fellow Stewardesses - as they were called at the time – were always asking questions about my hair. I became a master at changing the subject or giving false information. Shortly after my loss began, the National Alopecia Areata Foundation was formed, of which I was a founding member. I was not the only scared, lost bald girl on the planet. Within weeks of the Foundation's formation, I met hundreds of us.

It quickly became apparent to me that the aesthetic aspect of hair loss was as important as the medical cure side. I took off in the direction of 'finding a better mousetrap' – or, in this case, a better wig. My research took me to Australia, where I was fitted for a vacuum-type wig. I introduced this technology to the American market in 1982. It was hot and heavy, but it did not come off the head. I still have an original vacuum wig with a fiberglass base displayed in my hairpiece museum.

As I grew my sales network, the customer base expanded. After 28 years of selling this vacuum-type wig, a new, lighter and more comfortable base came on the market. I now deal exclusively with a grip-type base that is as secure and much cooler than the vacuum base. While walking outside one day, I actually felt a drop of rain on my head. Technology had progressed - but the wig manufactures took their time. In Italy, they were still doing it the way their ancestors did. Eventually, they caught up to new user-friendly ways of manufacturing. The hair shedding was corrected; the quality of hair had improved, and the bases and fits were customized to fit most heads. I now offer grip-type hair pieces to my clients. They stay put and look so natural: in many cases, they look even more natural than the wearer's own regrown hair. It is a win-win for everyone.

CHAPTER NINE

Peggy Knight Solutions Image Center

The Peggy Knight Solutions Image Center was the first of its kind. Full service for the woman undergoing chemotherapy. Hair, makeup, bras, prostheses and much more.

It all started when I met the Founder of Victoria's Secret. Roy Raymond became my partner and together we created the concept of an Image Center for Women. Our vision was to incorporate necessity and beauty, much the way he had done with Victoria's Secret. We soon became the talk of the hair replacement industry and had visitors from around the country. With my knowledge of hair replacement and his understanding of what women want and need, we made a dynamic team. We offered hair replacement, makeup, scarves, lingerie and breast prostheses to our clients. The salon was always filled with women having an initial cut or getting their hair coiffed for a big event. I learned so much about marketing and customer service from the master himself. He was truly a brilliant business partner and I credit much of my success to him.

Our union morphed into a network of 15 sales representatives across the US and abroad. Some of our clients are still here with us today. Last week, I worked with Alanna Powell, the founder of Boldly Me, a charity for children. We first met when she was 14 years old, and now she has three children going into college. That, my friends, is what I call loyalty. So many of my long-time clients continue with me because of the quality of hair and customer service. I am honored to have such a loyal following.

CHAPTER TEN

Kids and hair loss

Losing hair when you're a child is particularly challenging. I know firsthand how cruel kids can be. That's why Peggy Knight Wigs has developed hair replacements specifically designed for the younger set.

Younger children are resilient and often don't know they are any different than the kids on the playground. Some of my brave young clients teach me lessons about life without hair. They stand tall with their follicle-less heads held high and defy negative comments. They enter the world as proud individuals. I am so proud of these young people and absorb their confidence. Be Bald and Be Proud! We have come a long way, my friends.

For those who choose to wear hair, we have sizes ranging from XXXS to XL. We can fit almost any head size, which is the reason we do not worry about the hair slipping off the head: particularly important for children who play sports. As the old saying goes, size matters! This is especially true with wig sizing. Additionally, we adjust the density of hair to reflect the age of a child. Fine hair, and less of it, is best for children.

Parents often suffer guilt when it comes to their child's hair loss. Look into your family history and see if another family member has alopecia areata or another autoimmune condition. It may surprise you to discover that 20% will find a family connection. See the Medical Guide for more information.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Stages of Hair Growth

Our own hair grows in three stages. In the case of alopecia, this growth pattern is interrupted.

Anagen – growing stage

- Between 80 and 90 percent of a healthy individual's hair is in the anagen phase: that is, the time when the hair is actively growing. On average, an individual human scalp hair remains in the anagen phase for about 1000 days, or almost three years. However, this phase can last as long as eight years. The amount of time a hair spends in the anagen phase controls how long the hair will grow.

Catagen – resting stage

- The catagen phase is a short period of transition between the anagen and telogen phases. This phase lasts only one to three weeks. The catagen phase involves a period of major cell death, and only a remnant of the hair follicle remains at the completion of this phase. However, near the end of the catagen stage, movement of the dermal papilla occurs, setting the stage for re-growth.

Telogen – shedding stage

- During this stage, between 50 and 150 scalp hairs are lost each day. During this phase, hairs are only anchored by friction between the club-shaped root and the follicle. The telogen phase lasts approximately two or three months, a resting phase before the growth phase returns.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Stories of inspiration.

My loss is my gift. You are not alone.

When you think you have bottomed out, look to those of us who have walked your same path. I would not be the successful, happy person I am today without the lessons learned from my loss.

Becky has been a customer for almost 20 years. This is her story:

I was diagnosed at age 3. We lived in a small town in Wisconsin at the time. Our family doctor diagnosed my condition and said my hair loss would probably come and go throughout my life. This was not a satisfactory explanation and my family wanted answers. They blamed everything and everyone. My loss started at the nape of the neck. As a child all I dreamed about was to have a ponytail. As the spots grew in size, it was apparent my ponytail dream would never come true. All of my friends wore their hair in a ponytail and it was not fair. During my freshman year of High School, I had to wear a wig in order to cover the ever-growing bald spots. This was one of the hardest times of my life. How could I explain the sudden addition of hair? Well, I got over it and lived a normal life and was accepted by all of the kids.

Years later, after I was married and had children, my hair loss accelerated. I was completely bald. I tried everything known to the medical community, and even experimented with treatments not known. One of these treatments caused blisters on the head. Cortisone injections directly into the scalp were painful and worked for a bit. Never full regrowth. I remember one time I drove to Seattle with a shoebox filled with my fallen hair.

At long last, after many years of taking my hair loss journey alone, I found support from the National Alopecia Areata Foundation. I became an information junkie and researched everything available. I had always wanted to be a hairstylist, while friends thought I was crazy. "How could a bald woman become a hair stylist to others with natural hair?" It was my calling: I wanted to help people have great hair. I went to beauty school, became licensed, then began selling and styling wigs.

After working with so many chemo customers, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I took time to be with my family and distanced myself from hairpieces. I now manage a

chain of hair salons in the Western United States. To this day, I find nothing quite as satisfying as helping women through their hair loss journey.

Inspirational quotes from Becky:

Parents are afraid of what children and friends say and think about the loss of their mother's hair. Be your real self and an example to your children. Be proud of who you have become, and say so to yourself and other family members. Own it!

An older schoolmate had a very ugly wig, she would take it off when playing sports. I wish I had the guts to remove my hair in public and feel good about it. I am still in hiding.

Children: know you are not alone. Enroll in support groups. Educate classmates. Be bald and be proud! It is not contagious, and you will not die from it. Remember: God made some heads perfect and covered others with hair.

Tanya has been a customer for almost 15 years. This is her story:

Tanya is an entrepreneur and powerful business owner in Seattle who has been dealing with hair loss most of her adult life. The first thing I remember about her is her humorous approach to hair loss. We recently had dinner with another hair loss friend and it was non stop laughter. We told stories from our childhood, giving them a humorous spin. Covering painful memories with a funny story is one way to deal with them. At one point, Tanya got serious and reminded me of the Seven Stages of Grief. The two of us are in Stage 7, but that does not mean we skipped the previous 6. Have a look for yourself.

Tanya J: A longtime friend and customer

My story starts as a little girl, when I lost my hair and was forced to wear my first wig. The story I told myself was that God needed hair for another little girl who was less able to deal with her loss. Therefore, I was giving unselfishly to help another who was less fortunate. I believed that God knew what He was doing then, and this is still my belief today. I learned to give back to others at an early age, even though I did not understand it then. My first lesson was giving of myself and the second lesson was learning to accept my loss.

I realized that it was OK to be different and learned to love myself for my differences. Acceptance of myself and others was something I learned at a very early age. It was not always easy, and there were times I did not want to go to school. Nevertheless, I was a trooper and took it in stride.

Instead of thinking of a wig as something negative, I turned it around and thought of it as my accessory for the day. Like my shoes and purse, I could change it depending on my mood. Instead of running from questions like "Is that your real hair?" I answered with: "Yes, want to see my receipt?" I guess the experience gave me thick skin, but the way I look at it, everyone has something. Mine just happened to be the loss of my hair. I soon became obsessed with my hair and makeup. It was so easy to drop off my wig for styling and come back the next week to pick it up with a fresh and attractive style. Do I need to tell you I was something of a diva back then?

My most difficult times were during my dating years. I had to decide if I should tell my date right up front, or wait until he discovered it. I decided to tell up front, then if he was OK with my bald head, we just might have a chance at continuing a relationship. It was kind of like taking someone's temperature. My first love was OK with me running around the house wigless, but would never touch it. One day, I opened my eyes and saw him standing in front of me with my wig on his head. That was the day I fell deeply in love with him.

Now to tickle your funny bone. I was getting ready for work one day and could not find my hair. I looked high and low, all over the house. I didn't have back-up hair at the time (although I can assure you that has since changed) and I couldn't imagine where it had gone. As I went to feed my cat, I noticed that she was looking at me nervously. Instantly, I knew what had happened. I looked in all of her usual hiding places, finding many long-forgotten cat toys, when lo and behold, I saw it: under the sofa, all wet and chewed up. I called in sick for the day and spent the afternoon washing and caring for my beautiful hair. I still love my cat, but my hair will never again be within her reach.

This cat caper taught me a lesson about having multiple wigs. After a while, I had them in different colors. Each different head of hair had a name and a style to match. My favorite was Sandy Sultry. This color brought out my alter ego. I could be a different

person daily. It was such fun getting up in the morning and deciding who to be and what to wear.

I met a woman with alopecia at one of the conferences. She told me that she always hid from her friends and neighbors. One day, she put on makeup and big beautiful earrings, then walked out of her door with her head held high – and that was her last day of wearing a wig. I was so impressed with her confidence, but am personally unable to appear in public completely bald. I guess my wig is my security blanket to the outside world.

Soon, I learned to focus on my inner self by understanding the stages of grief and loss. Alopecia is my teacher and I go back to my thoughts as a little girl: God made me this way so I can be a mentor to others dealing with loss.

Stages of grief and Loss

Stage 1: Shock & Disbelief

Stage 2: Denial

Stage 3: Bargaining

Stage 4: Guilt

Stage 5: Anger

Stage 6: Depression

Stage 7: Acceptance and Hope

Carolyn B: A customer for over 20 years

Carolyn lost her hair at the age of 15. Like many of us, she was at a loss to understand what was happening. Carolyn was raised by her grandmother, and in those days such things were not discussed. You know: if you don't talk about it, it's not actually happening. So, no family for support. Doctors did not have the answers either, so she was left to fend for herself. She felt so alone and endured nasty remarks and ridicule from other children, which hurt so much as a child and still stung as an adult. It took a few more years for it all to fall out during college. All she wanted was to be normal and not think something was wrong with her. One of her most horrific memories was when she was working as an aide. She tripped and fell, and her wig went flying. She did what many of us would have done: she retrieved her hair and ran into a back room, locking the door behind her. Her coworkers had to talk her out. stung

The loss of hair was bad enough, but one day she lost her lashes and brows as well. Looking in the mirror each day only exacerbated her trauma.

One day she took a look and declared: *this is the new me. Get used to it, girl.* ,You know: i,it'

Carolyn fell in love, but she never talked about her hair loss with the man who eventually became her spouse. Can you imagine being married and not discussing the elephant in the room? This marriage soon failed, but another one was on the way. By the second marriage, her attitude had changed and her second husband loved her for exactly who she was – hair or not. This was the love of her life.

As a spiritual person, Carolyn made a plea to God: it was OK to take her hair, but please, please do not take it from her children or grandchildren. As a successful retired woman, she has now learned to love herself, hold her head high and be exactly who she is. She is worthy and valuable, and her hair does not define her.

Now, she adorns herself with makeup and big earrings: NO HAIR at all. She says to hang in there, ladies, and be yourself. Others will love you for the beautiful bald person you are.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Sharing the Love

Hair care isn't half as tough as self-care. It's time to regain self-esteem and learn to love yourself. You are not your hair.

I find the most rewarding way to deal with my loss is to help others who are just starting the journey. Volunteer your time to mentor others by calling one of the support groups. Be on an outreach phone tree to mentor others who are in breakdown. Give to them your valuable experiences and words of wisdom.

I have been in the hair replacement business for over 35 years and speak to at least 10 women, men and children per day. I learn something new each day for myself and others. I am here to be of support for all Hair Loss Thrivers and they are my teachers. Reach out and demonstrate you are more than just your hair. You survive and thrive each day, with or without your hair.

My latest not for profit charity is Children's Hair Loss Needs. Come join us by giving of yourself and making a child smile. Find out more at www.childrenshairlossneeds.org.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Guide to Hair Replacement Products

People with medical hair loss can now choose between many different hair replacement products. Good wigs and hairpieces will look natural and suit your needs and your lifestyle. Here is an introduction to the terminology that is often used to describe wigs and hairpieces.

Base Types

Net-Base Wigs

Net-base wigs offer flexibility. These types of wigs can generally be fitted to and worn by someone with either partial or total hair loss. Because they breathe, they are also comfortable and easy to wear. However, their fit will be less secure than that of a vacuum-base wig, and they may also require more care.

The best net-base wigs use an ultrafine net, sometimes called a "micronet," which keeps the hairs closer together, providing a more natural appearance. Some net-base designs also have a polyurethane or even a silk liner that increases comfort, ensures a more secure fit, and helps to provide a more natural-looking scalp at the part.

Net-base wigs may be ready-made or custom-made.

Design and Construction

Ready-Made Wigs

Ready-made wigs, which usually have a net base, are designed to fit a wide range of head sizes. The back of the wig generally has a series of eye hooks and a thin elastic band or Velcro strips that can be adjusted to make the wig fit snugly.

Ready-made wigs can be either machine made or hand-tied. Customarily, ready-made wigs that are machine made use synthetic hair. These wigs are very low in price and can be immediately purchased, but they rarely offer the style, comfort, and security that most people seek, and they generally cannot be restyled.

Ready-made wigs that are hand-tied can be made with either synthetic or human hair. Human hair provides a more natural-looking scalp and can be styled and restyled. Synthetic wigs cannot be restyled.

Semi-Custom Wigs

Some manufacturers offer semi-custom net-base wigs. These wigs come in a series of cap sizes and shapes, so an individual can select the cap that best approximates the shape of his or her head. Hair is usually then hand-tied onto this base to provide a natural-looking wig. It usually takes six to eight weeks to make a semi-custom wig.

Custom-Made Wigs

Custom-made wigs are carefully crafted to fit the precise shape of the head of an individual. Custom-made net-base wigs can be fitted and worn by someone with either partial or total hair loss, while custom-made vacuum wigs are designed specifically for people with total hair loss. It may take three to four months to create a custom-made wig.

The process of crafting a custom-made net-base wig begins with the creation of a scalp mold for an individual. After the natural hairline, crown, and part are traced on this mold, it serves as the model for the net base. Hair is then carefully selected to match an individual's natural or desired hair color, length, and style, and it is tied to this net base.

To create a vacuum prosthesis, a plaster mold is made of an individual's head, and the wig's base is formed directly from this mold. Hair is then carefully selected to match the individual's natural or desired hair color, length and style, and this hair is implanted in the vacuum base.

Handmade Wigs

Most custom-made wigs utilize hand construction methods. Hair is either hand-tied on a net base or it is implanted by hand on a custom-molded base. Hand construction methods are considered to be superior to machine construction because the hair in a wig can be tailored to an individual client's wishes and it will often have a more natural-looking appearance.

A WORD ABOUT THE HAIRLINE...

One of the most critical areas in wig design is the front hairline. Many wigs do not have natural-looking front hairlines, so clients are forced to wear bangs or pull their hair forward. Most wigs come with a Lace Front design that is very natural and replicates the front hairline.

Hair Types

Synthetic Hair Wigs

Synthetic hair wigs are relatively inexpensive, readily available in a wide variety of colors and styles, and easily maintained.

Due to technological advancements, the synthetic fibers in wig manufacturing have improved dramatically in appearance and quality, but despite these improvements they are still stiffer than human hair and thus do not yet blow and flow in quite the same manner. Many synthetic wig products are made with a plastic fiber, which holds its color and shape. This is both a plus and a minus. Synthetic wigs will retain most of their color even with prolonged sun exposure, but they cannot be dyed or highlighted, they cannot be permed, and most cannot be restyled. Some hand-tied synthetic wigs can be restyled by a professional.

Human Hair Wigs

Human hair wigs are often more expensive than synthetic wigs, but they generally last longer, and they look and feel more natural. They can also be colored and permed (by a professional), though they will gradually lose color with sun exposure.

Human hair comes in many grades, the finest of which is non-processed European-quality hair. Processed hair may be stripped of its outer cuticle layers and dyed, thereby lowering its quality, shortening its life and making it more difficult to care for.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Medical Hair Loss Guide

Guide to everything hair loss

The average person has approximately 90,000 to 150,000 scalp hairs. Natural blondes tend to have the most hairs (averaging 140,000) while brunettes and redheads fall on the lower end of the normal scale (averaging 105,000 and 90,000 hairs respectively).

All scalp hair continually cycles through a lengthy growth period followed by a short resting phase and then loss. During the growth period, which lasts two to six years, a hair emerges from a follicle and lengthens by roughly a half an inch a month. It then enters a resting phase, which lasts just two to three months. After the hair is lost, a new hair emerges from the same follicle within six months.

It is normal to lose 50 to 150 hairs per day. True hair loss, or alopecia, occurs when an excessive number of hairs are lost over a short period of time, or when hairs are not replaced in a timely or fully healthy fashion.

There are many medical causes for true hair loss, including

- Androgenetic alopecia, often called male or female pattern hair loss
- Alopecia areata
- Burns and scars
- Cancer and cancer treatments
- Diabetes
- Hormonal imbalances, pregnancy, and thyroid disease
- Infection
- Lupus
- Malnutrition, including iron deficiency
- Medications and medical treatments

- Stress, trichotillomania, and other illness

Androgenetic Alopecia

The most common type of hair loss for both men and women is androgenetic alopecia, more often called male or female pattern hair loss. In the United States alone, an estimated 50 million men and 30 million women are affected.

This type of hair loss seems to be directly linked to heredity, aging, and the presence and level of specific hormones. A genetic predisposition toward androgenetic alopecia can be inherited from either a mother or a father. To some extent, genes also seem to determine the speed, pattern, and amount of loss.

Androgenetic alopecia is not yet fully understood, but it is clear that the normal cycle of hair growth, loss, and replacement is interrupted as a person ages and hormones fluctuate. It seems that over time (in most cases, very gradually) the scalp hair follicles shrink in size, subsequently generating hair that is finer and finer and shorter and shorter. Some follicles eventually generate no hair at all, though most remain alive so they may still be capable of hair growth.

Related thinning and balding can begin in the teens, twenties, or thirties, but it often begins later in life. An estimated 25 percent of men are affected by age 30, and more than twice that percentage are affected by age 60. Women are affected in fewer numbers and they are most commonly affected after menopause.

The pattern of thinning and loss also differs substantially between women and men. Men often lose hair first at their temples and at the crown of their head and this loss may progress to complete baldness. Generally, the earlier the onset, the more extensive the loss. Women usually experience more diffuse and more mild or moderate thinning; they rarely experience baldness.

There is no known cure for male and female pattern hair loss, and such loss is considered permanent. But medical treatments are available to help slow or stop, and in some cases temporarily reverse, the progression of hair loss. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the use of minoxidil for both men and women. This drug is available in over-the-counter topical lotions that can be applied to the scalp to stimulate hair follicles. The FDA has also approved use of the prescription pill finasteride for men.

Alopecia Areata

Alopecia areata is a highly unpredictable autoimmune skin disease that may lead to the loss of hair on the scalp and elsewhere on the body. This disease affects males and females of all ages and races, but it often begins in childhood. This disease affects approximately 2 percent of the population, or about 4.5 million people in the United States alone.

The exact cause of alopecia areata is unknown. It is thought that a combination of genes predisposes certain people to this disease, and some trigger—or possibly the confluence of several things—sets the disease off. The immune system then mistakenly attacks hair follicles, which shrink in size, arresting visible hair production.

The first sign of alopecia areata is usually one or more small, round, smooth bald patches on the scalp. Thereafter, the pattern of hair loss is unpredictable: initial patches can regrow hair, and all evidence of the disease may disappear for years; patches of hair loss can appear and disappear repeatedly; or the disease can progress to total scalp hair loss (alopecia totalis) or complete body hair loss (alopecia universalis) for an extended period of time. It is important to remember that even if a person has had alopecia universalis for years, their hair follicles still hold the possibility for growth.

Alopecia areata is not life-threatening, but the loss of hair does make affected individuals more vulnerable to germs, dust, and other foreign particles entering the eyes, nose, and ears, and affected skin has diminished protection from sun, wind, and cold. Individuals with alopecia areata may also have an increased risk for atopic dermatitis, asthma and allergies, and thyroid disease.

Current treatments for alopecia areata often include the use of topical sensitizers such as diphencyprone or squaric acid dibutyl ester, and topical medications like minoxidil or anthralin. Corticosteroids may also be applied topically or taken in pill form or injected. Additionally, some physicians utilize ultraviolet light and alternative therapies.

A person's age at the onset of alopecia areata, his or her current age, and the length and extent of hair loss often determine what treatments might be effective. In general, the earlier, the longer, and the greater the hair loss, the less likely it is that treatments will be effective in stimulating regrowth. The presence of atopic dermatitis may also indicate that treatments are likely to be ineffective.

The search for a cure is ongoing.

Burns and Scars

Hair loss on tissue that is badly burned or scarred has long been thought to be permanent, but a recent discovery in the field of cell research brings hope that new skin and hair may someday be grown from adult stem cells.

Cell biologists at Howard Hughes Medical Institute and The Rockefeller University in New York have not only identified such stem cells deep in the hair follicles of mice; they have also managed to isolate these cells and multiply them in a laboratory. And, as reported in the September 3, 2004, issue of the scientific journal *Cell*, when they grafted these cells onto bald mice, they grew both skin and tufts of hair.

Cancer and Cancer Treatments

Cancer, cancer treatments, and the stress related to cancer can all cause hair loss.

Skin cancers can cause extensive and permanent hair loss on the scalp and elsewhere. Merkel cell cancer is one rare but aggressive form of skin cancer that sometimes develops in hair follicles themselves; it affects the very specialized neurosecretory Merkel cells, which seem to play a key role in hair growth.

Lymphoma cells can mass in the skin and destroy hair follicles. Cancers elsewhere in the body, including the breasts, lungs, liver, and kidneys, can also metastasize, spreading to the skin and destroying hair follicles. Once hair follicles are destroyed, hair loss is permanent.

Cancer can also cause hair loss indirectly, via anemia, hormonal imbalances or other illnesses that can cause hair loss. Even the general physical and emotional stresses that naturally accompany a cancer diagnosis and cancer treatment can themselves cause such loss. Such hair loss is generally diffuse and temporary.

Chemotherapy often results in temporary hair loss, while radiation therapy can result in either temporary or permanent hair loss.

Chemotherapy drugs target fast-growing cancer cells and seek to stop their rapid division and proliferation. Fast-growing normal cells, most often hair follicles, blood cells, and cells lining the gastrointestinal tract, may also be affected. As hair cells stop dividing, hair shafts thin and break off.

Some chemotherapy drugs (including methotrexate, cyclophosphamide, bleomycin, doxorubicin, mitomycin, cytarabine, vinblastine, and vincristine) seem more likely than other drugs to cause hair loss, and some seem more likely to affect scalp hair while

others lead to more universal loss. But all chemotherapy-related hair loss is highly variable. Some people experience hair loss and others do not, even when they are taking the same drugs at the same dosage.

Hair can be lost gradually or in clumps, and it can happen at any time, but it usually begins one to three weeks after the start of chemotherapy and then worsens after a month or two. Sometimes as much as 90 percent of scalp hair is lost.

While nothing can prevent or stem this loss, there is good news: once chemotherapy is completed, the hair usually grows back in six months to one year. Sometimes it even begins to grow back prior to the completion of treatment. This regrown hair may be very fine, it may break easily, and it may differ in color and texture from the hair that was originally lost.

It is generally best for chemotherapy patients to plan in advance for some hair loss. If a wig is desired, they might seek to match their original hair color and texture before it is lost. Custom-made wigs and hair prosthetics take up to four months for production and delivery.

Radiation therapy generally causes loss only in the specific area being treated. The dosage of the radiation may determine whether this hair loss is temporary or permanent. As with chemotherapy, if hair returns, it may differ in color and texture from the original hair that was lost.

Diabetes

Diabetes may result in hair loss for a wide variety of reasons.

People with diabetes are very susceptible to skin problems, which often lead to hair loss. Some of these skin problems, like bacterial and fungal infections, affect many people, but diabetics get them more easily and more often. Other skin problems, like diabetic blisters, diabetic dermopathy, necrobiosis lipoidica diabetorum, and eruptive xanthomatosis primarily affect diabetics—most often on their extremities.

Because of poor blood circulation, diabetics heal more slowly and scar more often from injuries, cuts, and scrapes.

Diabetes can also lead to many other problems, like hormonal imbalances, kidney disease, and weight loss, which can also cause hair loss.

Hormonal Imbalances, Pregnancy and Thyroid Disease

Hormonal changes and imbalances, no matter what the cause, often result in hair loss.

Androgenetic alopecia,

the most common cause of hair loss, is tied to the presence and levels of certain androgen hormones, particularly testosterone, in men and women. Though the hair follicles maintain the possibility for growth, and certain therapies seem to temporarily slow, stop, or even reverse the loss, androgenetic alopecia is generally considered permanent.

Similarly, **ovarian overproduction of androgen** can result in hair loss in women. This condition may require hormonal therapy, and even after the underlying problem is treated, the hair loss may not improve.

Androgen therapy

(including the use of testosterone and DHEA) to treat a low sex drive in women can also result in hair loss.

Polycystic ovary syndrome,

which is usually initiated by high levels of luteinizing hormone, androgen, or estrogen, can cause hair loss in teenage girls and women.

Hair loss following pregnancy

is tied to fluctuating levels of the hormone estrogen, and this hair loss is generally temporary. During pregnancy, women experience a rise in estrogen and this causes more hairs than normal to remain in the active growth portion of the hair cycle. (Hair loss during pregnancy is unusual and may be a sign of deficient vitamins and minerals.) After delivery, estrogen decreases and more hairs enter the resting phase and are soon lost. Noticeable loss often begins two to three months after a pregnancy ends, it may progressively worsen for up to four months after pregnancy, and it may continue for six to twelve months.

Similarly, the use of **birth control pills**, which usually contain progestin and estrogen, can cause hair loss, particularly in women who have an inherited tendency for androgenetic alopecia. And when birth control pills are discontinued, hair loss similar to that following pregnancy may result. This loss often begins two to three months after the pills are discontinued, and it may continue for several months.

Diseases of the thyroid and pituitary glands,

which regulate hormones, also often result in hair loss. If hormonal balance is restored, the hair loss is often temporary, but it can be permanent.

An overactive thyroid (or *hyperthyroid*) generally causes hair to become fine and soft and there can be scattered loss. An underactive thyroid (or *hypothyroid*) causes hair to become coarse and dry, also potentially causing scattered loss. These thyroid problems can also result from Graves' disease, thyroid tumors, or abnormalities of the pituitary, the hypothalamus, the testes, or the ovaries.

The pituitary gland is located at the base of the brain, and it interacts with the thyroid in regulating hormones. Pituitary tumors can cause hair growth or loss, or both sequentially. Some pituitary tumors initially stimulate increased hormonal production, but as the tumor grows and as regular pituitary cells are suppressed or destroyed, fewer hormones are produced. Hair growth increases or decreases along with these hormonal fluctuations. Pituitary tumors are usually benign (noncancerous) and the general prognosis is good if they can be surgically removed, but hormonal imbalances may be permanent and may require hormone replacement therapy.

Infection

Several fungal and bacterial infections cause temporary hair loss.

Ringworm, a fungal infection that is highly contagious, most often affects children but it can also affect adults, particular diabetics and others with compromised immune systems. It can infect the scalp or other parts of the body, including the groin and the feet. The first signs of this infection are small patches of scaling skin with a sharply defined, red edge or "ring" around them. These patches can spread, blister and ooze, and hair in these areas is soon lost. This infection is easily treated with topical or oral antifungal medications.

Cutaneous candidiasis, another fungal infection, most often affects individuals who are obese or have compromised immune systems. Candida can infect skin anywhere on the body, but it most often occurs in warm, moist areas such as the armpits. Symptoms include intense itching, a skin lesion or rash, and infected pimple-like hair follicles (folliculitis). Candida is generally treated with topical antifungal medication, but a more systemic approach may be required for folliculitis.

Folliculitis of the scalp or skin is most often due to bacterial infection by staphylococcus germs. While such an infection can be very serious, it can now be treated with both oral and topical antibiotics. Folliculitis can recur and become chronic.

Lupus

Like diabetes, lupus, which is an autoimmune disease, may lead to hair loss for many different reasons.

Generalized hair loss is one symptom of systemic lupus erythematosus. Lupus flares can interrupt normal hair growth, leading to hair that is thin and breaks easily. The resulting loss is generally temporary and diffuse.

People with lupus are also very susceptible to skin diseases and infections, many of which can lead to hair loss. In addition to skin diseases and infections that affect other segments of the population, people with lupus may experience discoid lesions and subacute or acute cutaneous lesions. Discoid lesions, in particular, can result in scarring and discoloration and localized permanent baldness. These lesions, which are initially coin-shaped areas of red, scaly and thickened skin located most often on the scalp, are often the first sign of lupus. On a more positive note, the majority of people who get this "lupus of the skin " do not go on to develop full-blown systemic lupus erythematosus.

More indirectly, systemic lupus erythematosus can lead to kidney and blood diseases that also cause hair loss.

Hair loss may also result from some of the drugs used to treat lupus, particularly antineoplastics, corticosteroids, and immunosuppressives.

Malnutrition and Anemia

Malnutrition, whether due to poor diet or eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia, often leads to hair loss. Seemingly healthy vegetarian diets that don't concentrate on providing enough protein can have the same result, as can diets that don't provide adequate iron or zinc. Even physician-approved diets that lead to slow and healthy weight loss can result in some hair loss—usually three to six months after a loss of 15 pounds or more.

In an effort to conserve scarce protein resources the body shifts hairs from the growth to the resting stage. The loss is gradual and diffuse and may not be noticed until nearly half of all hair is lost. This hair loss almost always reverses itself when an adequate diet is restored.

Medications And Medical Treatments

Many different medications and medical treatments can cause either temporary or permanent hair loss. Cancer treatments are notorious for this. Chemotherapy drugs, including antineoplastics like bleomycin and vinblastine, often cause temporary loss, while radiation therapy can cause either permanent or temporary loss, depending on the location and dose of the treatment.

Immunosuppressive medications, like methotrexate, which are used to treat autoimmune diseases like lupus and arthritis or to prevent the rejection of transplanted organs, also often cause temporary hair loss.

Other medicinal causes of what is usually just temporary hair loss include

- The use or discontinued use of certain steroids and hormone regulators like birth control pills
- Psychiatric drugs used to treat depression and bipolar disease
- Drugs used to treat heart problems and high blood pressure
- Anticoagulants and blood thinners
- Potent skin and acne medications like isotretinoin
- Diet pills that contain amphetamines

Some preventive vaccinations, particularly the hepatitis B vaccine, are also associated with hair loss. And hair loss can even be caused by too much of certain vitamins, particularly vitamin A.

Stress, Trichotillomania, and Other Illness

Over thirty specific diseases, including diabetes and lupus as well as diseases of the liver, kidney, and thyroid, are known to cause permanent or long-term hair loss. However, hair loss can also result from general illness: a high fever or a bad case of flu can initiate loss that is noticeable in one to four months but usually reverses itself soon thereafter, and chronic illness can cause chronic loss. Hair loss also often occurs after surgery.

Basically, any undue stress, whether physical or emotional, can result in hair loss.

Trichotillomania, a psychological disorder that may be linked to stress, involves the compulsive pulling or twisting of hair, resulting in patchy or diffuse hair loss. This compulsion is thought to affect as much as 4 percent of the population, and it seems to

affect females four times more often than males. This compulsion generally manifests itself before the age of 17 and is often limited to a period of a year or so. The earlier this compulsion appears and the sooner it is treated, the better the prognosis. Trichotillomania is not well understood, and some medical professionals believe that it is simply an ingrained bad habit, but it is sometimes treated with therapy and antidepressants.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How many wigs do I need?

No matter which type of wig you choose, it is good to have a backup. Wigs need regular care and sometimes require repair, so a backup is often handy.

How do I take care of my wig?

All wigs require regular home care. This generally involves shampooing and conditioning the wig on a weekly basis. Most wigs come with general care instructions, which should be followed for optimal results.

Human hair wigs should be treated as though they were your real hair. It is best to use salon shampoos and conditioners because of their superior quality and their gentleness on hair. If your hairpiece is colored or permed, you will want to use products for colored and permed hair. A human hair wig may be washed in cool or warm water, and it may be dried naturally or blow-dried with the heat set to cool or low.

Synthetic wigs react to heat, so they should be washed only in cool water and allowed to dry naturally. After drying, the wig will return to its original style with a few gentle shakes. Hot water, hair dryers, and curling irons should never be used on a synthetic wig.

Can I color and style my wig?

Human hair wigs can be styled on a daily basis, much like your real hair. Of course, care should be taken not to damage the hair when using items like curling irons. Human hair wigs can also be highlighted, colored, or permed by a professional stylist: note that the processes for coloring and perming a wig require special training and should not be attempted at home. Don't forget that a human hair wig will tend to hold its color (or a perm) for quite some time, since the hair does not grow out. Of course, the color will eventually oxidize or fade and a perm will eventually relax, so these treatments will need to be repeated periodically.

Synthetic wigs cannot be highlighted or colored, and many cannot be restyled. Those that can—primarily the more expensive synthetic wigs that have been hand tied—must be restyled by a professional.

Will my wig need repair?

Almost all wigs require periodic repairs to keep them looking fresh and natural. Some repairs take just a day or a week, but others take two to three months.

As with any head of hair, a human hair wig will lose hair due to normal combing and brushing. Hair is often lost first along the part and at the crown. On many wigs, hair can be added back in these and other areas to maintain a natural appearance.

Human hair wigs also may need to have some cuticles removed from time to time. Each human hair shaft has 5 to 10 cuticle layers, which are arranged like shingle layers on a house. Under normal circumstances these cuticles lay flat and hair is easily brushed. When human hair is permed or colored, the cuticles are opened and then closed again to complete the process. If the cuticles do not close properly, the top layer of cuticles may need to be removed before the hair will regain its manageability. This is a simple process if handled by the manufacturer.

Hand-tied synthetic wigs may need to be steamed to eliminate the frizzles or to be restyled. This steaming technique is difficult, requires highly controlled temperatures, and should only be done by a trained styling professional.

What should I expect to pay for a wig, and what will my insurance cover?

Products differ dramatically in price—from less than \$100 to over \$5,000— depending on the materials used and the process by which they have been made. Insurance will sometimes cover all or a portion of this cost if the wig is a medical hair prosthesis that has been prescribed by a doctor. Non Profit organizations that help people with medical hair loss often have information on how best to approach your insurer for reimbursement. Some of these organizations also have funds to help people in need to purchase medical hair prosthesis.

How do I locate a reputable wig provider?

You might check first with nonprofit organizations and support groups that work with people who suffer from medical hair loss to see if they have a list of recommended wig providers. Your dermatologist and your hairstylist may also know of reputable providers. Once you have a specific provider in mind, you might also want to check with the Better Business Bureau to see whether any complaints have been filed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Government Agencies

National Institutes of Health

(NIH) — an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that serves as the steward of medical and behavioral research for the nation. Search its website, www.nih.gov, particularly the MEDLINEplus database maintained by the NIH's National Library of Medicine, to learn the very latest research regarding all types of medical hair loss.

Professional Societies

American Academy of Dermatology

(AAD) — the largest dermatologic association representing virtually all dermatologists in the United States. Through its website, www.aad.org, you can locate a dermatologist, read the latest hair loss research, and access patient brochures.

American Hair Loss Council

(AHLC) — a nonprofit organization of hair loss specialists. Its Web site, www.ahlc.org, discusses primary types of hair loss, myths regarding cause, and surgical and nonsurgical treatments. It also offers referrals to local hair specialists, though it does not endorse individuals or businesses.

Primary Health Organizations

American Cancer Society

(ACS) — a nationwide, community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy and service. Its informative and accessible website, www.cancer.org, offers the cancer facts and figures, the latest related medical news and a listing of local and national activities, as well as strong support for patients and their families.

American Diabetes Association

(ADA) — a national nonprofit health organization providing diabetes research, information and advocacy in order to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives

of all people affected by diabetes. Its website, www.diabetes.org, offers a wealth of information on this disease, including information on diabetes-related skin problems and hair loss. It also discusses current treatments and progress in research, it hosts a multitude of message boards, and it lists community programs and events.

The Lupus Foundation of America

(LFA) — a national nonprofit volunteer health organization dedicated to finding the cause and cure for lupus. Research, education and patient services are at the heart of its many programs; it seeks to improve the diagnosis and treatment of lupus, support individuals and families affected by the disease, and increase awareness of lupus among health professionals and the public. Its website, www.lupus.org, offers a wealth of information on lupus-related hair loss.

National Alopecia Areata Foundation

(NAAF) — an international nonprofit community-based health organization that strives to support research to find a cure or acceptable treatment for alopecia areata, to support those affected by this disease, and to educate the public about this disease. In addition to a wealth of information, its website, www.naaf.org, offers access to very active online message boards for both children and adults, as well as to its new marketplace of hair loss products. You can also order a free video for children with hair loss and a special packet of information on how to get your insurance company to reimburse you for the purchase of a medical hair prosthesis.

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Closing - Contact

Of course, I'm equally proud of the work I've done through Peggy Knight Wigs to help young girls, teens and women of all ages to live happy, normal lives despite the loss of their hair. For more information about Peggy Knight Wigs, please feel invited to look around the www.peggyknight.com site, or just contact us.

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