

LEG HAIR TRANSPLANTS AND SCALP TATTOOS: HOW HOLLYWOOD'S A-LIST FIGHTS BALDNESS

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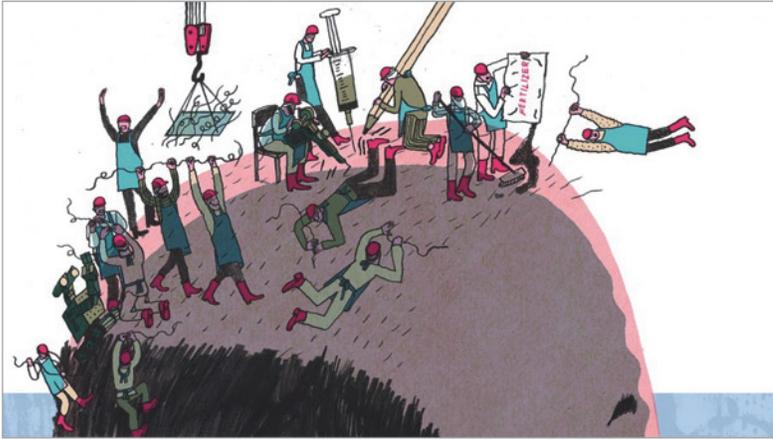


Illustration by: Josh Cochran

Even Matthew McConaughey has admitted he got assistance as Tinseltown anoints a new class of hair helpers whose \$9,000 NeoGraft surgery transfers individual follicles and punches them into the scalp.

This story first appeared in the Oct. 11 issue of The Hollywood Reporter magazine.

In a town obsessed with staying (or at least looking) young to remain on top, more than a few men agonize over going bald. Superficial though it might be, many derive confidence and a perception of power from a full head of hair.

Which is why anyone who's anyone in the follically challenged Tinseltown set has come to rely on a few good doctors. Armed with the latest technology, these gurus -- having moved far beyond yesterday's telltale hair plugs -- know how to help a man sprout hair or at least give the appearance of doing so, using several techniques from shots to transplants to tattoos.

Peter Goldman of Goldman Dubow Dermatology & Laser, who offers injections and serums, caters to as many women as men. His Cedars-Sinai offices in Los Angeles are bustling with activity as Hollywood types wait to see the city's secret weapon against receding hairlines.

His regimen fights hair loss before transplants are needed, and he sees as many as 50 patients a day, including agents, executives and A-list talent -- there's even a backdoor entrance to ensure discretion. But getting an appointment isn't easy or cheap: There is a three-month waiting list at \$300 a visit.

"In the '70s, it was about having a tan," says a television and film director who has visited Goldman once a quarter for 15 years. "Now, looking better than your age is the new version of being tan, and part of it is having a full head of hair."

Goldman's FDA-approved fertilizer for the scalp includes Rogaine and Propecia, but he adds other hormone blockers to prevent hair follicles from thinning or falling out. By putting anti-inflammatory medications in the mix, he believes, it allows the scalp to sprout new hair. "With these monthly injections and daily solutions, which include ingredients such as Rogaine, hair should grow within six months to a year," says Goldman.

But try telling a type A they must wait several months to see results. "In the beginning, they're impatient and convinced it isn't working," says the dermatologist. "But the golden words to my ears are, 'Doc, my hairstylist says they can see my hair is getting thicker.'"

Not every patient can be saved using simple shots. Ronald Moy, a Beverly Hills-based dermatologist and cosmetic surgeon, is known for NeoGraft surgery that delivers hair without leaving invasive signs. His Hollywood clientele, which includes Oscar-winning actors and actresses, can afford the surgery (which costs \$4,000 to \$9,000) but not much downtime.

During the time-consuming procedure, hairs are removed from the back or side of the scalp using a handheld vacuum with gentle suction. (This is advance from strip-harvesting which involves removing a piece of skin from the back of the head.) The hairs are then placed into other areas without a scalpel or stitches. Instead, individual hairs are placed carefully into thinning areas by a device that gently punches them back into the scalp. "This new technology is so natural that it's a game-changer, and the downtime is only a week," says Moy.

Even more advanced is the newer Artas System, which uses robots that are said to more accurately harvest and place individual follicles. One top doc who uses Artas is NYC's Robert Bernstein of Bernstein Medical Center for Hair Restoration.

There's another trick for those looking to hide a bad transplant or trying to make a new one undetectable to critical eyes. In Redondo Beach, **Sanusi Umar** uses leg hair to supplement transplanted scalp hair in a key place: the hairline. Because hair taken from the back or

side of the head generally is coarser, it can appear a bit obvious. Leg hair, which is softer, helps create a more natural edge. Costs run about \$8,000 for this finishing touch.

Aside from surgery, shots and serums, though, a low-tech solution is growing in popularity among those seeking to embrace baldness, fill in thinning hair or camouflage a scar. It's called scalp micropigmentation, a permanent cosmetic "tattoo" that mimics hair.

Hollywood makeup artists often use cosmetic concealers to cover such imperfections, but by applying permanent color to the scalp, the procedure reduces the risk of a makeup malfunction. "There are a lot of actors who have had bad hair-transplant scars or are covering a bald spot, and this frees them from using makeup," says Jae Pak of the New Hair Institute on L.A.'s Miracle Mile.

Accessorizing a shaved scalp quickly is becoming all the rage for the bald and bold. At the New Hair Institute, technicians artfully create tiny tattooed dots all over the scalp to give the appearance of stubble or a cropped buzz cut. Pak says the most commonly requested scalp shapes among male clients are those of Vin Diesel and Jamie Foxx. While patients undergo multiple tattoo treatments for \$3,000 to \$10,000 a session, the Hollywood inspiration is free of charge.

Few A-listers will cop to undergoing hair-loss treatments, but one is Matthew McConaughey. Two years ago on Late Show With David Letterman, the actor credited Regenix for his thicker hairline. "My hairline's better than when I was 18," he told Letterman.

The company then was flooded with calls and saw a 20 percent increase in business. Now it claims more than a half-million devotees, with hair-club members paying \$150 to \$300 a month for custom concoctions of naturally derived elements including plant extracts and fatty acids. "Matthew McConaughey has been very diligent with the use of the Regenix system for years," says Regenix CEO Bill Edwards. "He tells me the treatment worked so well that everyone thinks he has had a hair transplant."

Call it the ultimate plug for a plug-free head of hair.