

Vegetarian — Hair loss? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I have been a vegetarian for two years. Since last year, I have been losing quite a bit of hair. I have no pattern of male baldness in either side of my family. I do take multi-vitamins everyday. My diet is fairly nutritious. Could there be any correlation between my vegetarianism and the hair loss? Some books point to folic acid deficiency so I have made an effort to buy vitamins with 100%-200% RDA recommended folic acid. Do you have any ideas on what might be causing this?

—Where's my hair?

Answer

Dear Where's my hair?

You can expect to normally lose between 100-200 strands of hair each day. If your hair is coming out by the handfuls however, you do have cause to worry and should see a physician for a complete medical workup. A large loss of hair can indicate more serious bodily malfunctions. Stress can also be implicated as a cause of hair loss, and if things have been extra stressful for you lately, you might want to see a counselor to help you reduce your stress levels.

If your hair loss is more moderate, you are right that your nutrition and diet have a lot to do with it. Zinc is an important mineral for your hair, and a deficiency would probably show up as excessive hair loss, lack of sheen, and difficulty with control. The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for zinc in adult men is 11 mg, and for adult women the RDA is 8 mg. A zinc supplement might help you here, but consult your health provider before starting one. Zinc is found naturally in beans, seeds and nuts, legumes, milk, and wheat bran and germ. Also, in terms of your vegetarianism, you might very well be taking in insufficient levels of vitamin B-12. This is somewhat common among vegetarians, and the results of a deficiency include dandruff, scaling, and hair loss. Most of the naturally occurring B-12 is in animal products, but can also be found in nutritional yeast and sometimes in fermented soy products (i.e. tempeh). For adult women, the RDA for B-12 is 2.4 mcg. For adult men, the RDA is 2.4 mcg. Read [Vegetarian — B-12 deficient](#) ^[2] for more information on vegetarians and B-12 deficiencies.

If updates to your eating plan don't seem to help, perhaps a visit with your health care provider is the next step. S/he can run some tests to check for a number of other possible options. S/he may also refer you to a registered dietician. Never fear, hope is not lost. Happy eating and a speedy solution to your concerns.

Alice!

Category:

[Nutrition & Physical Activity](#) [3]

[Optimal Nutrition](#) [4]

[Vegetarianism](#) [5]

Related questions

[Pre-mature hair loss](#) [6]

[Wife losing hair](#) [7]

[Stress leads to hair loss?](#) [8]

[Vegetarian — Vitamin B-12 deficient?](#) [9]

[Pros and cons of vegetarianism](#) [10]

[Patchy hair loss \(Alopecia areata\)](#) [11]

Resources

[Medical Services \(Morningside\)](#) [12]

[Medical Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [13]

Published date:

Nov 01, 1993

Last reviewed on:

Jul 08, 2015

Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
 - [Content Use](#)
 - [Media Inquiries](#)
 - [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
 - [Licensing Q&As](#)
 - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
 - [Full Site Syndication](#)
 - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please [visit our Emergency page](#) to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/vegetarian-%E2%80%94-hair-loss>

Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/vegetarian-%E2%80%94-hair-loss>
- [2] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/vegetarian-vitamin-b-12-deficient>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/nutrition-physical-activity>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/optimal-nutrition>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/vegetarianism>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/pre-mature-hair-loss>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/wife-losing-hair>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/stress-leads-hair-loss>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/vegetarian-%E2%80%94-vitamin-b-12-deficient>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/pros-and-cons-vegetarianism-0>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/patchy-hair-loss-alopecia-areata>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>