



IS YOUR HAIR SUDDENLY SHEDDING LIKE CRAZY? YOU MAY HAVE A CONDITION CALLED TELOGEN EFFLUVIUM

What is telogen effluvium?

Telogen effluvium (TE) is a **very common** hair loss condition characterized by periods of increased hair shedding. You may see an excess amount of hair in your shower drain, in your hair brush or on your pillow in the morning. **The shedding is NOT subtle.** It comes on quickly and can lead to 30-50% scalp hair loss. People who experience TE are understandably upset, thinking that all their hair will fall out.

What causes telogen effluvium?

First, let's discuss what happens in a normal hair cycle. Typically, 90% of our scalp hairs are in the growth phase (anagen). These anagen hairs stay on our heads for about 3 years and grown long, before turning into resting (telogen) hairs. Telogen hairs make up about 10% of our scalp, and only stay on our scalp for 3 months before shedding. These telogen hairs are the 100-150 hairs that we typically shed each day.

The hair follicle can be very sensitive to changes. **When a person experiences a stressful event or "trigger", hair follicles may prematurely switch from the growing anagen phase of the cycle to the resting telogen phase.**

After a three-month delay, these telogen hairs shed in enormous amounts, up to 300 hairs per day! This over-shedding lasts three months and then stops on its own, without treatment. Most people do not recognize the association between the trigger and the hair loss because of the three-month delay in between.

Potential triggers that can cause a TE episode:

- Pregnancy, delivery or miscarriage
- Illness or fever
- Hospitalization or surgery
- Abnormal thyroid hormone function or change in dose of thyroid medicine
- Significant emotional trauma such as the death of a loved one, divorce, or job loss
- Starting, stopping, or changing hormone medications including birth control or IUD
- Entering menopause

An example: Mary went on a diet and exercised successfully lost 20 pounds by July (the "trigger"). In October, (3 months later), she noticed CLUMPS of hair in the shower drain and in her hair brush. The hair continued to shed at this rate until December (3 months from the start of shedding), and then went back to normal shedding. Her hair then regrew slowly on its own.

The good news: Your hair will regrow.

The bad news: Hair regrowth is slow. Hair grows at a rate of 1 centimeter a per month.

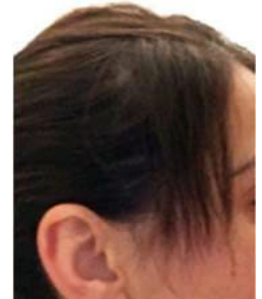
This means that if your hair length is to your shoulders, your ponytail or the length of your hair likely won't feel "full" or normal again for 2.5 years! However, you will see short hairs growing on the top of your scalp, and slowly these catch up with the rest of your hair.

See the photos below of our own Dr. Senna after the birth of her youngest child (See? No one is spared!)



The photo to the left shows what **2-3 months of regrowth** looks like after shedding stops (her child was 8 months old then). You'll notice the short bangs are about 2-3 centimeters long.

The photo to the right shows almost **ONE YEAR** of hair regrowth (her child was 18 months old at this point). The hairs at her cheek were all the hairs she lost from telogen effluvium associated with delivery! Although you shed all over, the frontal scalp really takes a hit!



Can I make my hair grow faster?

Unfortunately, nothing makes this growth happen faster. To date, there are also no treatments proven to prevent TE or to stop the shedding once it starts.

What you can do if you think you've had a TE episode:

1. **DON'T PANIC!** We hope that this information will reassure you that although experiencing TE is not fun, it is a self-resolving form of hair loss.
2. **BE PATIENT.** Your hair will regrow. You don't need to spend money on supplements or other treatments for this to happen. Take pictures and document your hair regrowth if it helps you.
3. Most importantly, **try to avoid new potential triggers.** Certainly, major life stressors, surgery, and illness are not always avoidable. But, it is important to maintain a stable weight, not switch around birth control methods frequently, and ensure that your thyroid is functioning properly.
4. If after 6 months, your shedding does not return to normal (100-150 hairs a day) or your hair on top of your scalp does not regrow as it once did, this could be the sign of another type of alopecia. In this case, proper evaluation with a dermatologist is recommended.