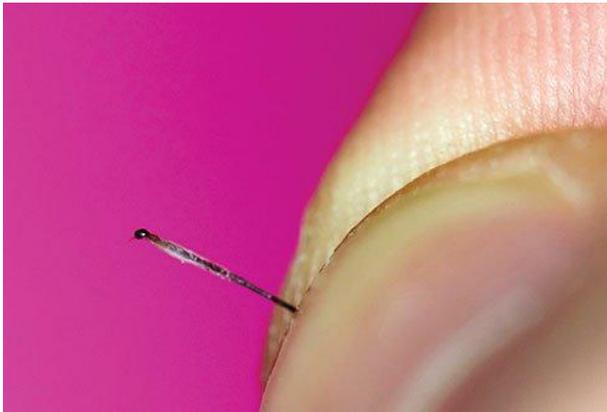


15 Gray Hair Causes and Fixes: Touch-Ups, Natural Coloring Tips



All About Gray

Graying hair is a normal part of aging, but why does hair turn gray? Hair goes gray when the hair shaft no longer produces melanin, the pigment that gives hair its color. Your risk of going gray increases 10 to 20 percent every decade after the age of 30. Once you go gray, now what? Will you cover your grays or dye them away? Luckily, women have more options today than ever before. Whether you choose to go all natural or color your hair, you can look and feel your best at any age and no matter what your hair color.



Why Do We Go Gray?

Hair follicles within the hair shaft contain pigment cells that contain melanin. This pigment gives your hair, skin, and eyes their color. When these pigment-producing cells in the hair shaft start to die, hair begins to gray. New hair that grows from the hair shaft may turn gray or silver before eventually turning completely white. Once the pigment-producing cells in the hair shaft are gone, you will no longer grow colored strands of hair.



When Does Hair Turn Gray?

Contrary to popular belief, stress does not cause gray hair. Why and when do we go gray? Hair grays when melanin-producing cells in the hair shaft die. The hair shaft can then no longer produce colored strands of hair. Genetics largely determine when you will go gray. Look at your parents and grandparents for an indication of how early and how quickly you may go gray. Premature graying seems to be especially genetic. If one or both of your parents went completely gray in their 30s, there is a high probability that you will go prematurely gray, too.



Race Is a Factor

Hair turns gray largely due to genetic factors. Race also plays a role. People of Caucasian descent typically start to go gray in their mid-30s. Those of Asian descent begin to gray, on average, in their late-30s. African Americans typically begin to go gray in their mid-40s. You may be early, average, or a little late in going gray depending on when your parents' hair changed color. Gray hair typically, but not always, starts around the temples.



Premature Graying

Premature gray hair is defined as hair that goes gray at least 10 or more years earlier than it should. The age cutoff for defining premature gray hair differs according to a person's ethnicity. Caucasian people who go gray at age 20 are said to have premature graying. An Asian person whose hair turns gray at age 25 is said to suffer from premature graying. African Americans are said to go prematurely gray if their hair turns gray at the age of 30 or younger.



Health Problems Associated with Gray Hair

Several conditions may be associated with an increased risk of gray hair. Autoimmune conditions are health issues where the immune system attacks part of the body. Vitiligo is an autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks and destroys cells in the scalp that make pigment. This results in graying hair. Lack of vitamin B12, thyroid disorders, and rare tumor conditions may cause gray hair. Alopecia areata is a condition that produces patchy hair loss. It may mimic sudden graying because the hair that regrows may come back in white, gray, or your natural color.

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Can Stress Cause Gray Hair?

Stress cannot directly cause gray hair, but it is associated with increased hair loss. Stress is a common trigger for telogen effluvium, which is a condition associated with rapid hair loss. People who have telogen effluvium experience hair loss that is three times faster than normal. Chronic stress affects hair growth negatively and can lead to persistent hair loss. Stress seems to change hair follicles and push them into the so-called resting stage. After undergoing a period of hair loss, it is possible that the hair that grows back may come in gray. This is especially true if you are middle-aged or older.



Smoking Is a Problem

Smoking is not good for any part of your body and that includes your hair. In one study, smokers were 2 1/2 times more likely to go gray before the age of 30 years old than nonsmokers. And for those people who already have silver hair -- the silver foxes -- it can make silver gray look yellowish. If you smoke cigarettes or use tobacco, stop. If you need help, talk to your doctor. There are prescription medications and quit smoking programs that can help you kick the habit for good.



Avoid Plucking

Some people believe that if they pluck a gray hair out from the root, three more gray hairs will grow back in their place. That old wives' tale is not true, but it is still a good idea not to pluck. If you pluck out too many gray hairs, you may have bald patches! And more gray hair will just grow back in its place. If you pluck too much, this may damage hair follicles so much so that hair no longer grows back. This may cause your hair to appear a lot thinner over time. Dyeing gray hairs is a better idea than plucking.



How Is Gray Hair Different?

Gray hair is not as thick as hair with natural color because the outermost part of the hair shaft, the cuticle, is thinner than hair with pigment. Without this protection, gray hair does not have protection against ultraviolet rays, water, chemicals, humidity, and heat styling. This makes gray hair more coarse, dry, and stiff than naturally colored hair. Grey hair is more susceptible to damage from ultraviolet (UV) rays than brown hair. Stylists find that gray hair is more difficult to get to hold a permanent or temporary set. Gray hair is more

resistant to taking on artificial hair color than blonde, brown, black, and red shades of hair. Does your gray hair look limp and thin? Ask your stylist about special shampoos, haircuts, and hairstyles to make your hair appear fuller and more voluminous. Discuss which type of hair color would flatter your skin tone and hair type.



Tame Wild Hair

Coarse, dry gray hair may be frizzy. Use deep moisturizing treatments and hair oils to combat dullness and dryness. Be careful about exposing gray hair to the sun and heat and light from lamps as both of these have a bleaching effect on gray hair, making it appear yellow. Ask your stylist for tips about how to prevent the bleaching effect. Using a shampoo that is a purple shade can help keep gray hair looking like the vibrant silver color that you want.



Hide Grays with Clever Hairstyles

Women who are not into the idea of coloring their hair can hide a few grays using clever hairstyles. Try parting your hair in a new place to conceal grays. Wear your hair up if you have long hair to hide gray roots. Use a colorful headband to detract from grays. Ask your hairstylist for recommendations about hairstyles that are flattering after age 50. Choose a stylist who has expertise with clients who have gray hair. Discuss whether embracing your gray is preferable to dyeing gray hair in your situation.



To Dye or Not to Dye?

If embracing gray hair is not an option, you may want to explore dyeing your hair. You can use a boxed product from the supermarket or drugstore. Be sure to choose products that are especially formulated for gray hair. Semi permanent color will not cover gray roots as well as permanent dye. Your stylist has salon quality products that cover gray better. Some clients' gray hair does not take dye. If that is the case, opt for a lighter shade that will blend in more easily with your natural grays.



Opt for All Natural

Some women are not comfortable with gray hair. If that is the case, you can use a few tricks while you are going gray to minimize a patchy, multicolored appearance. If you have a lot of gray, your stylist can apply highlights to make your hair look more uniform. If you were used to using permanent hair color, switch to an opaque demi color to camouflage the appearance of grays as they come in.



Choose a Good Haircut

Getting the right hair cut can give your hair both lots of texture and style. Keep your hair neat by getting a trim approximately every 6 to 8 weeks. Women with gray hair often opt for short hairstyles. Long layers may be appropriate for you. Layers make hair appear full, healthy, and give it lots of bounce. Women who have curly hair may naturally have fuller, thicker hair compared to women who have straight hair.

Reviewed by [Charles Patrick Davis, MD, PhD](#) on 12/6/2018

Sources:

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https://www.medicinenet.com/gray_hair_beauty_facts/article.htm