



I've practiced dermatology for almost 20 years. During the past seven years, I've seen an exponential rise in appointments for hair loss among black women. I suspect if I polled other dermatology colleagues around the country, their impressions would strikingly be similar.

Why is it happening? Here are some issues we need to consider to tackle this conundrum:

\* Is access to dermatology care more readily available, or has the frequency of hair loss increased among black women?

\* Are there cultural and family habits practiced and passed down through generations that are contributing to hair loss?

I believe there are unhealthy hair habits perpetuated from generation to generation. Both in my practice and in day-to-day life, I'm seeing girls younger than 18 who display early signs of permanent hair loss that may lead to baldness. That's tragic!

In this series, I'll talk about the causes, prevention, strategies, and treatments for hair loss. Let's embark on this quest for knowledge together. Hosea 4:6 says "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge".

Biochemically, the composition of "black" hair is identical to naturally straight hair. However, under the microscope, the strands appear in a curled and spiraled pattern. This tight curl pattern makes curly or kinky hair more prone to form knots and tangles. That's why black women's hair can be fragile, making it susceptible to breakage and injury.

One other factor is important to understand. Black hair has a lower water content and fewer sebaceous glands, which help to lubricate the hair. The result is an increase in hair dryness as the natural oils are unable to migrate down and lubricate the hair shaft.

Moisturizing the hair is very important because the tight curl pattern makes the hair more susceptible to breakage when styling. Which moisturizer to use? Many companies have jumped on the bandwagon in the multi-billion-dollar black haircare market. Using monikers such as "organic" and "sulfite free", they position their products as best for healthy hair, but some of their ingredients are cheap and diluted for mass marketing.

I personally use and recommend Hair 180(degree sign) Organic Hair Formula Revitalizing Shampoo, Hydrating Deep Conditioner and Leave-in Conditioner and Detangler. They can be purchased online at [www.hair180.net](http://www.hair180.net). The shampoo is free of sodium lauryl sulfate, parabens and DEA. Mild on all hair types, it contains high-quality ingredients specially formulated with Omega-3 and Omega-6 properties.

The Hydrating Deep conditioner is infused with excellent quality shea butter, organic coconut oil and organic raw honey which intensely nourishes, repairs, and strengthens dry, damaged hair, minimizing split ends. The leave-in conditioner is a lightweight formula that moisturizes hair without leaving residue.

Once a week, I also use Emergencia ("emergency" in English), a deeply penetrating, intensive hair treatment which controls volume and softens. This rich treatment is infused with organic avocado and olive oils that replenish very dry, thirsty, porous and rebellious hair with essential nutrients. In the winter, I apply it and sit under a dryer for 30-45 minutes. In the summer, no dryer is necessary but I'll leave it on for 30-45 minutes and wear a shower cap. To ensure product authenticity, I recommend purchasing Emergencia from Amazon Prime online as it is made in the Dominican Republic.

Next time: When is hair loss temporary and when is it permanent?