



HAIR TRANSPLANTATION

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A hair transplant is an elective surgical procedure used to improve baldness. Hair transplantation is the process or technique in which a physician redistributes hairs from an area of thick growth to bald areas. This is generally on the scalp but in some instances it can involve other areas of hair loss. Most hair transplants are performed in an office setting under local anesthesia. Generally, only minimal pain should be experienced. After thoroughly cleaning the scalp, small needles are used to numb an area of normal hair growth, the donor site, on the back of the scalp. A portion of the hairy scalp is then removed with a scalpel and set aside while the surgeon sews the cut scalp closed.

After the donor site is closed, small groups of hairs, or individual hairs, are separated out from the removed scalp using a magnifying lens and sharp blade. The area that will receive these healthy hairs, usually the front of the scalp, is then cleaned and numbed with additional injection of anesthetic. Finally, tiny holes are made in the front of the scalp and healthy hairs are delicately placed in the holes. During a single treatment session, many hundreds or even thousands of hairs may be transplanted. In patients who are concerned about their balding, hair transplantation can significantly improve their appearance and self confidence. Realistic expectations are important, however. It is important to remember that new hair is not being created; hair can only be redistributed from the donor site to a balding area.

Most patients undergoing hair transplantation have traditional male or female pattern baldness (known as androgenic alopecia), with hair loss on the front or top of the scalp. Patients must still have thick hair on the back or sides of the scalp, or there may not be enough hair follicles to move. In some cases, patients with hair loss from lupus, injuries, or other medical problems may be treated with hair transplantation. Patients undergoing hair transplantation should be otherwise relatively healthy, or surgery is less likely to be safe and successful. Always discuss your risks and options with your physician before undergoing any elective surgery. In addition, the physician should examine and recognize the underlying cause of the patient's hair loss, and estimate the effect that time will have on the hair loss process. The patient must be provided with ample time to ask questions and arrive at a complete understanding of the procedure, expected outcome, and the changes that can be expected over time.

As with any surgical procedure, risks exist. The most common complications of hair transplantation are bleeding, infection, and scarring. Though the process can be well thought out, it is possible that the transplanted hair won't look as good as desired. Older techniques often resulted in unnatural appearing tufts of new hair growth. With modern techniques, this complication is infrequent. The transplanted hair usually falls out after transplant, this is an expected part of the process. Most modern hair transplants result in excellent hair growth within several months after the procedure. However, more than one treatment session may be needed to create the best-looking results. The replaced hairs are usually permanent, and no long-term care is necessary.

During the recovery period after surgery, the scalp is often very tender and pain medications taken by mouth may be necessary for several days. Some type of surgical dressing must be worn for at least a day or two after the procedure. Some surgeons may also recommend several days of antibiotics or anti-inflammatory drugs following surgery. After this very brief recovery period, no special treatment is needed.

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