

TRESS TRIALS

What a Trichologist can do for you

BY LISA EVANS

Hair is at the root of our identity. A well-tamed mane can make us feel like a million bucks, while a bad hair day can quickly dampen our mood. While many of us turn to the hairdresser at the first sign of hair trouble, there's another professional who can provide a longer-term solution to our hair dilemmas: a trichologist.

A trichologist analyzes the scalp in the same way a dermatologist examines skin. While most of us analyze our hair in the mirror—asking whether it needs a colouring or cut, whether it lacks sheen or is too dry—a trichologist thinks about the beginning of the hair's life cycle and focuses on the scalp. "A healthy scalp is going to produce healthy hair," says Amalia Ruggiero, owner of Capilia Truly You Hair Loss Solution Centre in Mississauga, Ont.

"We're not a hairstylist or a doctor; we specialize in scalp health," says Ruggiero. Although most of Ruggiero's clients are women who are experiencing hair loss and thinning hair, I had another problem: a dull mane and an itchy scalp. My dark sweaters were littered with embarrassing white flakes, and my hair appeared dull and lifeless. Although I'd tried dozens of shampoos—ranging from drugstore brands to salon-quality products—nothing seemed to revive my lifeless locks or cure my dry scalp.

Ruggiero invited me in for a consultation and handed me a three-page questionnaire about my scalp hygiene and health. I answered questions about how many times a week I wash my hair (four) and a list of products I'm using. Questions about general health, chronic stress and conditions such as thyroid issues and diabetes are also included. "Our hair is the barometer of our body," says Ruggiero. "If our body is not in sync,

our hair is going to feel it in many forms." Once the trichologist has a full picture of her client's health, she gets to the root of the problem—literally.

Using a special camera called a capilloscope that magnifies the root of the hair up to 200 times its normal size, a trichologist examines the scalp and hair follicles. Ruggiero asks that clients not wash their hair for 48 hours before having the scalp analysis. "I want to see the true environment that the hair is growing from," says Ruggiero. Looking at the scalp up close allows the trichologist to understand the condition of the scalp—whether it's oily, or scaly or has a buildup of silicones and parabens (chemicals commonly found in shampoos). Based on the images, she can diagnose problems such as alopecia (thinning hair), seborrhea (scaly scalp) and dermatitis (eczema) and prescribes treatment solutions tailored to specific conditions.

Ruggiero is looking for a healthy scalp—one that shows open, dilated hair follicles free of debris and a pinkish colour on the scalp showing capillaries—the life support system of the hair. "The more capillaries we see, the stronger the hair is going to be," says Ruggiero.

When my scalp appears on the screen, it looks nothing like what Ruggiero described as "healthy" and resembles more of a snow-covered ski hill. "All of these are dry scales," says Ruggiero, pointing to the sea of white that litters my scalp. Silicones and parabens have built up on my scalp and are stuck to my hair shaft, making it difficult for the hairs to shed naturally, as is part of their life cycle.

Ruggiero diagnoses my condition as pityriasis simplex (dry scales) and prescribes a treatment plan. A residue treatment removes all debris from my scalp and prepares it to receive products from Laboratoire Nature, a line of natural, paraben- and silicone-free products that is tailored to

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Encourage growth with Revivogen Scalp Therapy (\$106, dermatologist and trichologist clinics). Simply spray on the scalp each day for healthier hair.



specific scalp conditions. The one-hour residue treatment is like a facial for the scalp and includes brushing and scalp massaging techniques and steaming to open up the pores of the scalp.

Although it feels more like a medical appointment than a visit to the salon, a trichologist's services aren't covered by OHIP or extended health coverage, and no doctor's referral is required. Trichology is still a relatively new field in Canada and is slowly changing to more closely resemble a holistic practice. In the near future, Ruggiero says she will be able to take a hair sample, analyze it for missing nutrients that are important for a healthy scalp and recommend dietary changes—something that is already being done by trichologists in other parts of the world, such as Australia and England, where trichology is a degree program.

Within 30 days of receiving my residue treatment and following a strict hair-washing regimen prescribed by Ruggiero, I return to Truly You to put my head back under the camera. "Look at all the pink," says Ruggiero. Capillaries! My scalp no longer resembles the ski hill and, as a result, my hair has regained its formerly lost sheen. ☺

nourish YOUR SCALP FROM THE INSIDE OUT

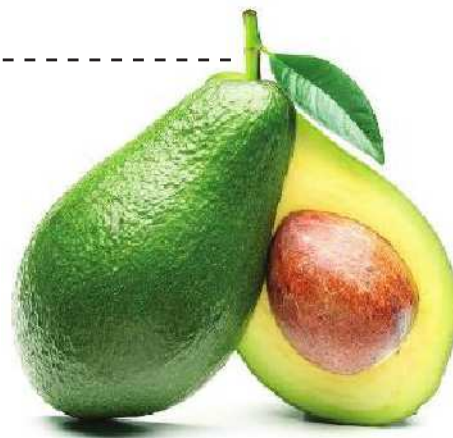
"Your hair is an outward look at what's happening on the inside," says Toronto-based holistic nutritionist Joy McCarthy. Give your locks a boost by adding these scalp-healthy vitamins and minerals to your diet.

VITAMINS A AND K Dry, brittle hair can be an indication of nutritional deficiencies in vitamins A and K. These vitamins help produce oil on your scalp, acting as your hair's natural conditioner.

B VITAMINS Vitamins B₆ and B₁₂ are involved in the creation of red blood cells, which carry nutrients to the hair follicles (the roots). Without proper nutrition, your hair becomes starved, making it limp and more prone to shedding and slow growth.

VITAMIN C "[Vitamin C is] used in the formation of collagen, which literally holds our body together," says McCarthy. Collagen is not only important in forming the body's muscles and cartilage but also aids in the creation of healthy-looking, fuller hair by stimulating the follicles to increase the diameter of individual hairs.

HEALTHY FATS While indulging in chips and cookies produces a hormonal imbalance that can cause hair to appear



dry and lifeless, including healthy fats such as avocados and coconut oil in your diet can give a dull mane a healthy glow. Fats moisturize from the inside out and help nourish hair follicles.