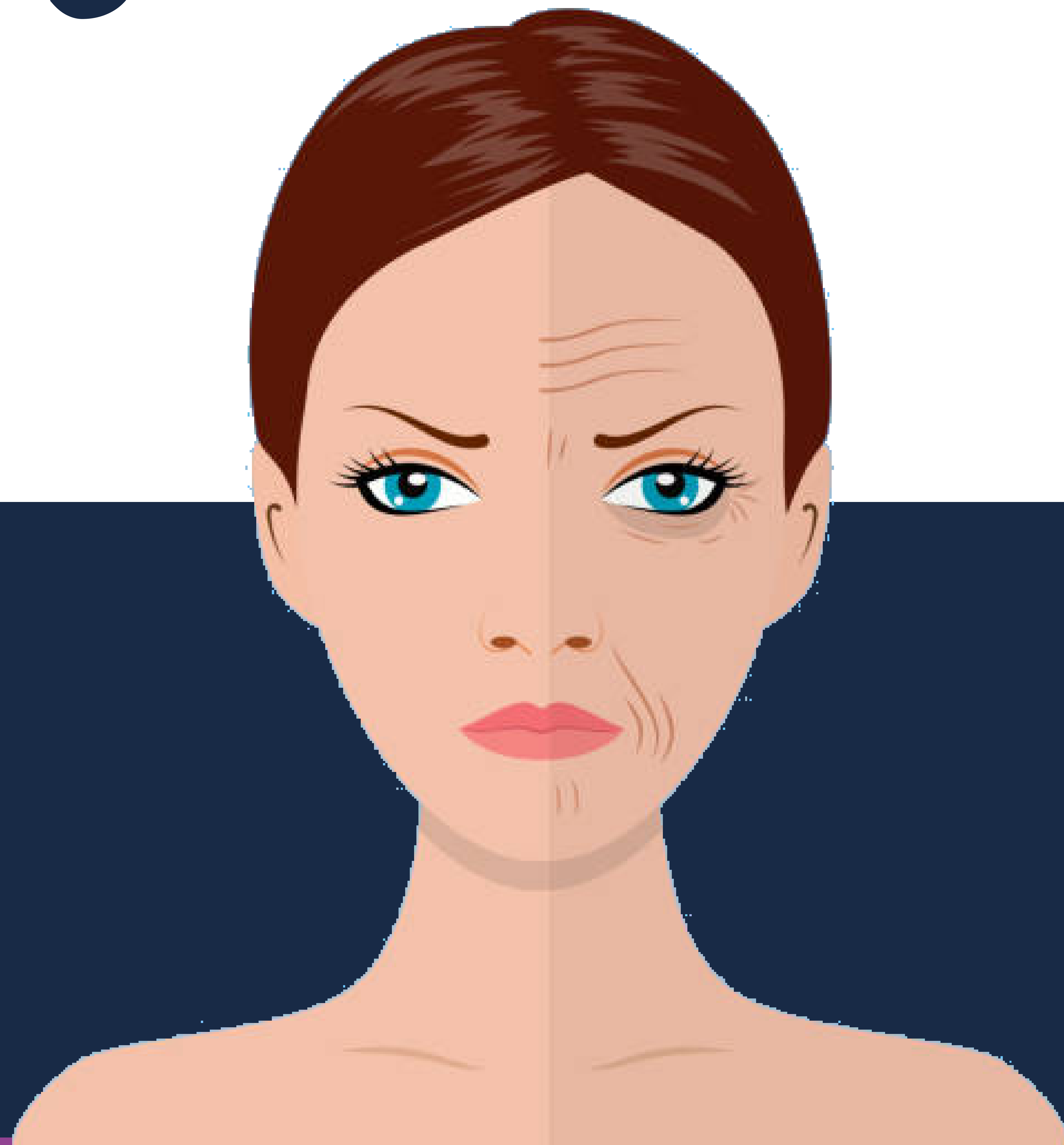


ANTI-AGING HAIR CARE TIPS



Your hair is one of the first places people look to determine your age. Although you can't stop the hands of time, there are plenty of ways to turn back the clock. There are two ways to address how your hair ages. These are how it actually looks and what is going on microscopically that cannot be seen (1).

With regard to the latter, one of the most important things to start with for an anti-aging hair care routine is a healthy diet. A balanced, nutrient dense diet is going to help your body fight off disease and promote growth in all areas of your body, including your hair.

Foods high in protein, such as meat, eggs and fish, are necessary to promote the growth of stronger, thicker hair (2). If you are not a meat eater, you can get protein from beans, lentils, nuts and quinoa.

The specific protein that makes up hair is keratin. For this reason, there are shampoos and conditioners that contain this nutrient. Using these products regularly is a good idea to keep your hair at optimum health and prevent hair loss. Alternatively, you can use special keratin treatments to smooth the hair every now and then (3). However, do not use them too often as they have been reported to have higher than recommended levels of formaldehyde (4), which at best can cause irritation and at worst can lead to cancer (5).

To support the production of keratin to grow healthy hair, biotin (also known as vitamin B7) is necessary (6). The best foods to eat to get enough biotin and keep your hair healthy are liver, kidney, salmon, eggs, almonds and sweet potatoes (7).

The Omega-3 fatty acids found in oily fish such as mackerel, sardines, flaxseed and walnuts will help nourish your hair follicles. Omega 3 has also been shown to increase the thickness of hair and even prevent hair loss (8). Eating other healthy fats such as avocado and olive oil will also contribute to the healthy growth and nourishment of hair.

A deficiency in zinc has been shown to cause hair loss as well as thinning hair (9), so make sure you are getting good sources of zinc like lean meat and seafood, especially liver and oysters. Vegetarian sources are almonds and chickpeas (10).

One of the main signs of age with regard to hair is hair loss. This occurs when hair follicles become weak and do not grow hair. This can be genetic but is mostly linked with growing older (11). If hair loss has occurred at an early age in your family, it is worth looking at ways to protect against this happening. One way is to eat soy-based foods (12). Soy foods include soy milk, tofu, edamame, miso and tempeh (13).

Hair loss can also be caused by a build-up of toxins in the body from smoking (14) and air pollution (15).

For that reason, one of the best things that you can do to prevent hair loss, which makes you look older and is also distressing, is to stop smoking. This will also benefit your health in other ways. If you live or work in the city, it is hard to get away from pollution. However, in order to prevent toxic substances in pollution from being absorbed into your hair, cover your hair with a headscarf or hat, if possible, and wash it daily with warm (not hot) water and a mild shampoo.

One of the most important tips for hair anti-aging is to avoid heat damage. Heat can be one of the worst enemies for your hair because it dries out your hair and makes it brittle (16). So it is best to allow the hair to dry naturally, if possible.

If, however, you cannot wait or you want to style your hair, keep the hairdryer moving and 15 cm or more away from your hair to reduce the amount of damage to your hair (16).

It is important to wash your hair gently and use a moisturizing shampoo and conditioner that doesn't contain sulfates to prevent further drying of your hair (17).

As we age and go grey, we tend to use dyes to keep our natural colour as long as possible. However, it is best to avoid harsh dyes and chemicals if you can. Many of the things put into dyes, shampoos, and other hair care products are harsh chemicals that strip away your natural oils or damage your hair. It is important to find safe alternatives that will keep your scalp healthy.

One way to protect your hair and keep it looking healthy, is to use a hair mask regularly. You can buy them commercially, but why not make them from the foods that are known to benefit hair?

For long and medium length hair: Mix together the flesh of half a ripe avocado, 1 egg, 50g of coconut oil and 10-15 drops of geranium essential oil. (Use half this recipe if you have short hair). Apply it to wet hair and cover (an old shower cap is ideal). Leave it for about 20 minutes. Rinse your hair with cool water. Do not use hot water or you will cook the egg! Then wash with a mild shampoo and condition.

Rose geranium essential oil is used in this recipe as it is great for hair growth because it nourishes and stimulates the scalp. This oil can also be used as a base for home-made conditioners and even hairspray (18).

As we age, our hair can get thinner. Having the wrong hairstyle can add years and make it more obvious that the hair is thinning. For that reason, it is a good idea to consider having shorter hair and possibly a fringe/bangs (19). Another reason for having your hair cut in the correct style, as you age, is that long, lank hair is perceived as making you look older (20).

Be sure to wear a hat when you are in the sun to protect your hair from the drying and damaging effects of UV rays. You may feel slightly daft, but for more protection, especially in the mid-day sun, use a parasol or even an umbrella (21).

As discussed, hair can have a huge impact on how old you look. It is worth looking after your crowning glory because, after all, the better you look, the better you feel and the younger you will look and feel.

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