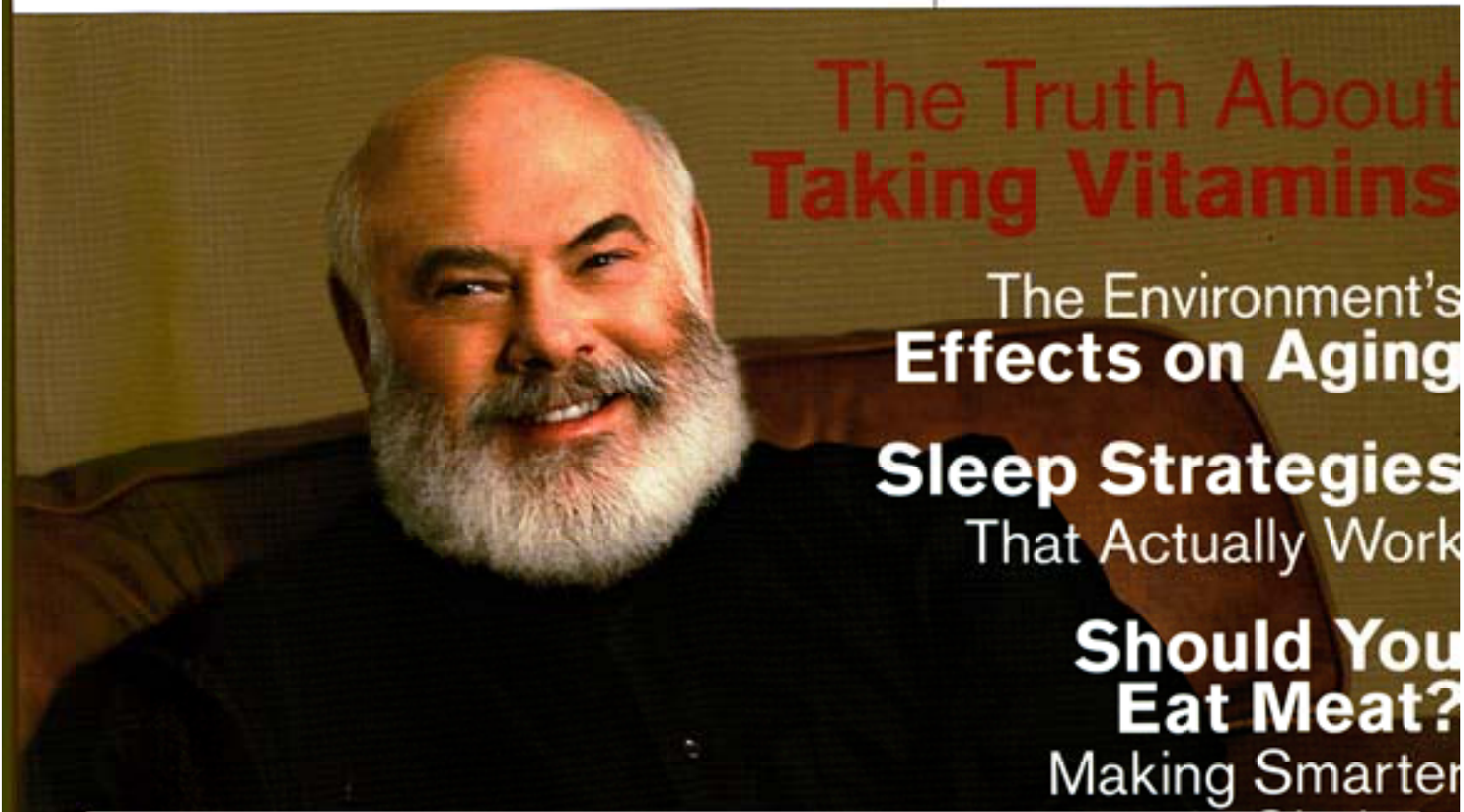


Dr. Andrew Weil's

Self Healing

Creating Optimum Health for Your Body and Soul

2009 ANNUAL EDITION



The Truth About Taking Vitamins

The Environment's Effects on Aging

Sleep Strategies That Actually Work

Should You Eat Meat? Making Smarter Choices

Counteracting Hair Loss

The latest findings on preventing hair loss and restoring healthy locks.

When I started losing my hair in my early 30s, I remember feeling as if I were somehow losing a part of my identity and youth. Eventually, I grew accustomed to my new look and came to embrace it. Now, a few science-backed technologies just might help you spare your crowning glory.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the body's mechanism for replacing lost hair slows as we age, thinning happens to some degree in everyone. When more extensive hair loss occurs, it is commonly the result of androgenetic alopecia (pattern baldness), affecting nearly one-



Journal of Cosmetic Surgery and Aesthetic Dermatology found the comb promoted hair growth and strengthened hair in men and women with androgenetic alopecia.

Hypnotherapy Steven Gurgevich, PhD, Mind-Body expert at the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine (ACIM), says medical hypnosis can help those with alopecia nervosa (caused by emotional distress) and other types of hair loss. A 2007 study found 12 out of 21 patients with alopecia areata experienced significant hair growth after undergoing hypnosis.

Diet and Supplements While I think the effects are modest, evidence suggests that saw palmetto berries promote hair growth by blocking the conversion of tes-

third of men and women. Hair follicles are sensitive to dihydrotestosterone (DHT)—a metabolite of testosterone that shrinks hair follicles—and this hereditary condition can increase activity of DHT in the scalp. In women, hormonal imbalances, such as those during pregnancy or menopause, can also serve as instigators. In addition, hair loss can be triggered by medication, chemotherapy, iron deficiency, or thyroid problems; in these cases, the hair usually grows back when the underlying cause is treated.

THINNING OPTIONS

With so many hair-loss products now on the market, I'd like to weigh in on the latest discoveries as well as older options: **Medication** Minoxidil (Rogaine), applied directly to the scalp and formulated for both men and women, is available with-

some studies found finasteride to be effective in postmenopausal women with normal androgen levels; however, it can cause birth defects and should not even be handled by women who may become pregnant. Side effects appear to be uncommon and limited for both products; however, recent investigations suggest a potential risk of erection, ejaculation, and fertility issues with long-term use of Propecia.

Laser Treatment Lasers stimulate hair follicles by emitting a painless, low-level light to the scalp. Treatments are performed in doctors' offices and medical spas, although recently introduced "laser brushes" for home use may be more cost-effective. In 2007 the FDA approved the HairMax Laser Comb for male-pattern baldness. It is not yet approved for women, but a 2003 review in the *International*

tosterone to DHT. There are many popular supplements containing saw palmetto often in combination with other vitamins, minerals, and herbs. However, these products can be "difficult to evaluate," according to David Kiefer, MD, a specialist in herbal medicine at ACIM. "The exact amounts of ingredients are not always mentioned, and, when they are, important details (such as standardization compounds) are sometimes left out."

To encourage regrowth, include omega-fatty acids in your diet by eating salmon, walnuts, and freshly ground flaxseed. Take 500 mg of evening primrose oil or black current oil, which provides the fatty acid GLA (gamma-linolenic acid) that may help strengthen hair. Talk to your doctor about the safety and efficacy of combining hair-loss supplements and medication before adding them to your daily regimen.