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-third of American adults. However, other factors can also contribute to hair loss, including stress, genetics, hormonal imbalance, and certain medications.
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 without prescription. 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