

# **WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY**

## **Day of surgery and up to 2 months following surgery**

Immediately following surgery, you will have fresh incisions that are clean but look a bit like a rash. Certain hair and skin types with little existing hair may be quite surprised on how well it is hidden (masked). On the second day, a small scab the size of a pin head will sometimes be visible and remain on the scalp for two-six days after surgery.

Around day seven, the grafts are set and you may begin washing the area. Using the pads of your fingers, start rubbing the scabs while the soap is on the scalp, but do not pick at it with your nails. The rubbing should take off about a third of the scabs each day.

By the 10-14th day post-op, the area should be virtually scab free. The area should be undetectable other than, possibly, your scalp being a little dry which would not draw attention to your scalp. At this point, any transplanted hair that did not shed off with the scabs will grow for 3-6 weeks and generally shed. This is completely normal. Things will then remain dormant for about 2 months. Beginning at 3-4 months, you will experience hair starting to grow slowly. This is what is called the active growth stage.

## **What to expect at 3-4 months following surgery**

Most patients should begin to experience some growth by the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> month. Generally, new hair should begin to grow after the 3<sup>rd</sup> month mark, but everyone is different. Some experience new hair growth earlier and others a little later. Some may think that what they see is the final result, but that is not the case at all. At best, the hair growth at this time represents approximately 20% of the growth you should anticipate. When the transplanted hair first appears, it is immature, fine, thin, and light in color. As time passes, more transplanted hair will appear and will become thicker, longer, and darker.

Itching in the recipient area or discomfort in the donor area may be present at the three-four month mark. However, it should pass in a few months. The incision in the donor area at this time is healed but still remodeling. It will continue to improve over time. Also at this stage, a few patients may develop small pimples (folliculitis) around the transplanted area as hair emerges. If this occurs and persists, we need to be notified. There are ways of treating folliculitis.

## **What to expect at 5-6 months following surgery**

A significant change usually occurs between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> month. By the 6<sup>th</sup> month, about 80% of the hairs should have penetrated the skin. However, only about 50-60 percent of the final visual aesthetic effect has been achieved. Between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> month is the best time to schedule your follow up appointment to evaluate the progression.

## **What to expect at 12-15 months following surgery**

The visual result continues to improve for up to 15 months and it is only after 15 months that the final aesthetic is typically achieved. The reason for the continued improvement over the last 6-8 months is due to the following:

- There still may be about 10 to 15 percent of the hair that has not reached full maturity. Mature terminal hair develops between 8 and 15 months post-operatively as the hair obtains its normal thickness. Hair will become longer, darker in color, and thicker in diameter. A very minimal change in diameter has a significant effect on the appearance of fullness.
- Remember the aesthetic effect of a hair transplant is more dramatic when a patient has no original hair (bald) in the transplanted area. When a patient has some of his/her own original hair in a transplanted area, the procedure is just as successful, but the results are less dramatic because a new hair line is not being created. In these situations, we are increasing fullness of hair in a thinning area. Patients will notice more refinement (blending) in the transplanted area as well as an improved appearance of fullness under a greater number of circumstances.