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# prima

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# 'I couldn't face life as a bald woman'

As her parting became wider and wider, Lesley Shervington, 41, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, began to dread going out. Then a bald patch appeared and she knew she had to take drastic action

Sometimes I wonder if the beautiful hair of my childhood is a figment of my imagination. But then I pull out old photos – and there I am, aged 12 with long, thick, dark hair, and again, aged 16, with lovely layers. I had the kind of hair I could do anything with.

But then, when I was 23, I started to notice a lot of hairs coming away on my brush. And then my parting began to get wider. I was losing my hair!

I'd had glandular fever, and at first my GP thought the hair loss was a result of the stress my body had been under. This being the case, I should have seen a steady improvement as my health picked up. But, instead, my hair carried on getting finer.

I could see more and more of my scalp, and what little hair I had was both frail and greasy. It needed lots of washing – but with each wash I'd moult even more, and great clumps of it would be left in the shower plughole. Each morning, I'd wake up to find lots of hair on my pillow.

My doctor agreed to refer me to a dermatologist, and I went along, believing I'd come away with a solution – something that would bring my hair back. But it was a humiliating experience, with absolutely nothing to gain at the end. The

consultant examined my head with a magnifying glass, muttering unhelpful comments like, "Hmmm, there's no sign of new hair coming through here..." He didn't give me any advice or support – just a confirmation that yes, I was losing my hair.

I was left to deal with the problem alone – and did so the only way I could, by paying out for every hair-thickening product I saw advertised. None of them worked, so I just had to struggle on, and try to forget what I looked like. Within the space of a few years, I'd developed bald patches all over my head. I began to dread leaving the house, because I felt so ugly. My self-esteem plummeted in my twenties and thirties, when I was supposed to be at my most attractive. Imagine how you feel when you've having a bad hair day, then multiply it by 100.

The only time my hair thickened was when I was

pregnant with my son, John, who's now seven. During those months, everyone kept commenting on how well I looked. I felt fantastic. But after John was born, I lost all my new hair and developed a huge bald patch on the back of my head.

I returned to my job as a manager for the local council – a job I loved and which did great things for my self-confidence. But my hair loss made me look ill. Instead of getting the ego-boosting remarks I had received when I was pregnant, people kept asking, "Are you all right, Lesley?"

I went back to my GP again, and had another demoralising visit to the dermatologist, who just confirmed that all the tests revealed I was well – the hair loss was not a symptom of serious illness. All I could do was to strategically back comb the fine hair I had, in order to make

myself look more acceptable.

Then, three years ago, a colleague at work mentioned that she fancied having hair extensions. I offered to do some research for her on the internet and soon realised it was me

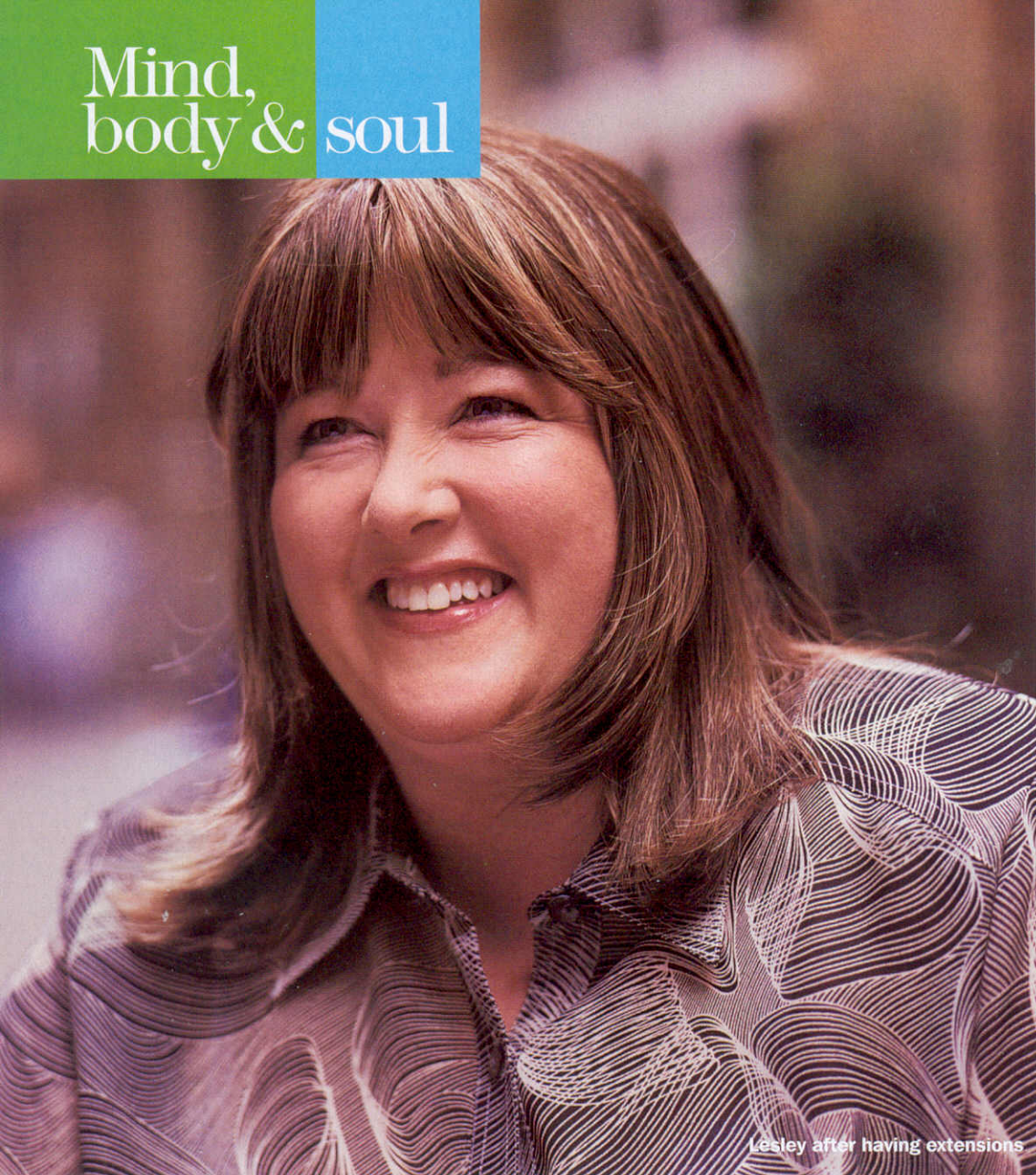
## Eat to beat thinning hair

- Iron (from lean red meat, game and offal) helps prevent hair loss.
- A deficiency in biotin (found in cooked eggs, peanut butter, oats and liver) can also be the cause of hair loss.
- If you don't drink enough water, your hair will suffer (whether it becomes greasy or dry as a result).
- Caffeine has the opposite effect to water. It dehydrates the body and can drain iron stores, aggravating hair loss.



who needed hair extensions, not my colleague!

I'd always thought my hair was too weak to take the stress of having something attached to it. But a website for a London specialist was recommending extensions as a treatment for hair just like mine. Still slightly sceptical, I called the clinic, and then flew down to London with my mum, Pat, for a free



Lesley after having extensions

## Normal hair loss or alopecia?

- We normally lose 150 to 200 hairs a day, but with alopecia there is no new growth.

- Hair loss is most common after pregnancy, and when this happens it's known as telogen effluvium.

- Male pattern baldness (alopecia androgenetica) causes thinning hair and affects more than a third of older women. It's a hormonal condition caused by a genetic predisposition.

- Hair loss that starts suddenly in patches and can become total (alopecia areata) affects one in 100 women and numbers are on the increase.

- Alopecia areata is an auto-immune disease in which some of the white blood cells overwork and attack the hair follicles. But, so far, scientists don't know what triggers this process.

For more information, contact Hairline International. Send an A4 SAE to Lyons Court, 1668 High Street, Knowle, West Midlands B93 0LY.

## Within a few years, I'd developed bald patches all over my head. I began to dread leaving the house, because I felt so ugly

consultation and trial. Everyone was so welcoming, kind and sensitive that I booked myself in for the full treatment a few weeks later. When they'd finished attaching the synthetic hair, I looked in the mirror and felt tearful. The change was amazing – I looked like the old me, only better.

When my husband, Trevor, 40, met me back at Newcastle airport, he nearly walked past me. My hair was so fantastic that I looked a good ten years younger than when I'd left home that morning. Trevor was over the moon – and so

was!! Even John noticed. And the comments at work were really wonderful.

I now have hair I can trust to stay looking good after showering, swimming, and even diving. I can do what I like to it – colour it, pin it up, straighten it... I can even have Tina Turner curls if I want them!

Of course, treatment like this doesn't come cheap. I paid £1000 for the first treatment and it costs another £160 every six weeks to have my extensions tweaked. But it's done so much for my self-esteem, it's worth every penny.

## How to... treat alopecia

- Minoxidil (sold as Regaine, from £24.95) works for some people. It was originally used as a treatment for high blood pressure, and a side effect of taking the drug was that it was found to stimulate hair growth.
- Supplements such as Nourkrin (£49.95), which contains marine extracts, silica and vitamin C, can help to balance the diet and strengthen hair growth.
- Nioxin, a skincare system that treats the scalp and creates the best possible growing environment for hair, is referred to by salon insiders as 'Baby Bio for hair'. It contains a blend of essential oils and extracts of grape seed, white tea and fennel. For stockist details, call 0845 458 9350 or visit [www.nioxin.com](http://www.nioxin.com).
- For more details of the treatment Lesley had, call 020 7495 6969 or visit [www.markglenn.com](http://www.markglenn.com).