

Beards

Beards don't seem too common these days. I've been in places full of short-haired beardless men and felt more out of place due to the beard than the hair. I'm not sure why this is. Perhaps its because I'm actually more aware of the presence of beard than I am of the length of the hair.

My feeling on beards is that if you can grow a good beard with long hair, you should do so. Someone with short hair and no beard spends a lot of time shaving. Someone with long hair and a beard spends a lot of time dealing with the hair. Someone with short hair and a beard is lazy. Someone with no beard and long hair spends too much time grooming.

I also find that the beard cuts down on "Excuse me, miss", except from the direct rear. But I mostly grow the beard because of the skin irritation caused by shaving, and my beard is softer than my face is a half-day after I shave.

Stages of Hair Growth

As your hair grows, you'll pass through several stages of development. At some stages, your hair actually gets easier to handle, but overall longer means more work.

At the first stage, your hair gets in your eyes. Next, it gets in your mouth. Then it starts to get easier: it can be tucked behind your ears. Then, easier still, you can put it in a ponytail, then better yet a braid. But as it gets longer, it starts tangling, needing more care. Fashion starts getting more flexible at this point, different braid patterns are possible, buns; at some length two braids can reach around your head to meet in front, eventually you can have one braid that reaches all the way around your head.

At a few inches past elbow length, you will begin to develop habits to control your hair. I have the reflex now that when I bend over, one hand folds across my chest and holds my hair to keep it from getting into whatever I'm bending over, and keep it off the ground.

Once it reaches your waist, your hair starts getting more annoying. The next milestone is when you start inadvertently tucking it in your pants, and then getting it caught in your fly. After that, I don't know: that's the stage I'm at. Hair that reaches the ground while standing upright is probably the next significant increase in difficulty of handling.

So, You Want To Let It Grow

Now, if you've decided to let grow, good luck.

You have to do it for yourself first, and those around you second. You're the one that has to wash it, dry it, comb it, braid it (most of the time). You're the one who has to avoid sitting on it or stepping on it, getting it caught in doors, under bodies, etc. If you're doing it just for other people, it'll drag you down. And if you don't at least occasionally get the support of other people, you'll decide to chuck it one morning.

But, I hope you do choose to "Grow For Itt", and hope to see you, and your hair, in the future.

Grow Your Hair Long v1.0

a guide

by

Dr. Craig Allen Counterman

a.k.a

ilyn ÆRy



© 1991 Craig Allen Counterman

This pamphlet is a guide written to answer the questions I am often asked, such as "How do you get your hair to grow so long? I can't get mine to get any longer than this..." It is also intended to encourage the growth of long hair, so I have more company... I welcome any feedback, further information, and corrections.

Why Grow Your Hair Long?

Here are some reasons I give for why I wound up growing my hair as long as possible, none of which is completely true:

Rick Wakeman

Cousin Itt

I was traumatized by a barber when I was 5

Lack of bread

Annoy parents

Here are some of the more mundane, realistic reasons:

I look silly with short hair, it doesn't do anything, it has no body

Family tradition

People I've loved love it

Because I can

How?

There are two keys to growing long hair:

1. **Pick the right parents**
2. **Avoid damaging your hair**

First, some background:

Show Off Your Dead

Hair is basically dead material, extruded from *follicles* in the scalp. These follicles have a natural cycle of being on and resting. While on, hair grows, when resting, the hair is shed and falls out. The cycle time is genetically determined. The length that the hair grows while a follicle is active sets the maximum length.

Since hair is dead, things go downhill for it after it's produced.

Hair is basically a polymer, like plastic, the structural material is a long chain molecule. Water penetrates the hair fiber and affects links between the chains, weakening or breaking them. This is why hair is limp when wet (the extra weight from the added water doesn't help, either). Wet hair is also more fragile. When the hair dries, the links between chains re-form. If the hair is shaped when wet and allowed to dry in this shape, the links formed tend to keep this shape. This is how hair curling works, and yields the waviness of hair dried while braided.

A 'Perm' is a chemical treatment to make strong chemical links between chains, rather than the normal weaker links.

Washing

Washing is the critical time for hair. When it's wet, its most fragile, most likely to stick together, most likely to tangle. Washing is also an opportunity to undo some of the damage done in daily life.

Wash only as often as needed to remove excess oil and dead scalp.

Consider your hair to have two sections: near-scalp and long-dead. The near-scalp region gets oil from the glands in the scalp. Use shampoo to remove the excess oil. The rest of your hair needs help. It needs conditioning, it needs to be pampered. Thus, I use shampoo and only shampoo only on the scalp, and a creamy conditioner on the rest.

The shampoo I've been using for years is Head and Shoulders. The conditioner is Mill Creek Keratin Conditioner with Panthenol. It is claimed that the panthenol helps repair split ends; this seems to work for me. The Head and Shoulders or other anti-dandruff shampoo may also help hair growth; the active ingredients are antioxidants, which keep the scalp oil from becoming rancid and irritating the hair follicles.

Be especially careful with wet hair. Untangle it gently while rinsing the conditioner out. Avoid tangling it while drying: don't towel it roughly, and don't pull too hard while squeegeeing it. A blow dryer is OK, but stop while the hair is still moist: don't overdry at all. Air dry as much as possible. Again, take care to avoid allowing tangles to form

during this time. Before doing anything active like going to bed, braid your hair. If your hair is especially thick, it may not dry in the center of the braid; try using several smaller braids. Braiding damp hair also introduces a pleasant waviness when the hair is unbraided. In my case, however, it fades after two to four hours.

Perms, Dyeing, and Straightening

All three damage hair and should be avoided if your goal is long, healthy hair.

Combing and Brushing

I only comb my hair, never brush it. Comb (or brush) carefully from the bottom up, to avoid tangles; carefully untangle any tangles which are found. Comb while wet to avoid dried-in tangles, then allow to dry hanging loose or braided.

Ponytails and Braiding

Your hair can be considered long, in my opinion, when you can put it in a ponytail with the elastic at your shoulders. When you can do this, do do it. Keeping it in a ponytail keeps down tangles, and reduces the risks of stray hairs getting caught and lost. Braids are even better, but require longer hair. One caveat: be careful not to damage your hair with the elastic. Use a thick elastic for a ponytail, and only as tight as needed to keep it on; for the end of a braid use a small loop.

Trimming

Conventional wisdom says that you need to trim your hair to make it longer, the theory being that you need to remove the split ends before they propagate up the hair. I don't buy this. Better to avoid the split ends in the first place through proper care and conditioning.

Nutrition and Health

Eat nutritious, high protein... A diet which is good overall, but particularly rich and balanced in protein, is important in growing hair which the body builds out of protein, not to mention the rest of you. According to D. Pearson and S. Shaw, in *Life Extension* and the *Life Extension Companion* (Warner Books, 1982 and 1984), supplements of the amino acid cysteine may be helpful for hair growth. They note that hair is 8% cysteine, and this amino acid is not common in the diet, except for in eggs. They recommend taking cysteine [which is *not* equivalent to cystine, though they are related forms] in conjunction with vitamin C, taking at least 3 times as much C as cysteine. They suggest starting with 250mg of cysteine a day and working up to 1g. I recommend you consult their books before engaging in megadose supplementation such as this.

I have been eating only a normal, balanced, largely vegetarian, diet for the past few years, but plan to try cysteine supplements soon.