

# DOES HIJAB CAUSE HAIR LOSS?



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Worries about hair loss are a common concern for women who cover their hair, such as those who wear the Hijab (religious attire worn by Muslims). While the hijab itself does not cause hair loss, practices surrounding the hijab and covering of skin can create an environment of poor hair quality, excessive pressure and traction, leading to excess hair loss.

## NORMAL HAIR LOSS

While it may seem like you are losing too much hair from wearing the hijab, this may only seem excessive from normality due to not shedding hairs throughout the day. Hair loss of 50-150 strands a day can be considered normal [1], and this typically happens throughout the day. As one's hair may be tied under the hijab all day, hair loss may look significant, but this very well might be in the range of normal!



## HAIR CARE PRACTICES

However, it is possible to engage in hair care practices that encourage hair loss. Tightly wrapped hair styles under the hijab may cause traction alopecia - a condition leading to hair loss in the area the pressure was applied [2-3]. Traction alopecia is most common with frequent use of tightly wrapped buns, braids or pigtails [2]. To prevent traction alopecia, ensure your hair has time each day to be out of tight-fitting hairstyles, and use hairstyles with less pressure under your hijab! Traction alopecia, in its early stages, can be reversed with a cessation of tight hair styles [3]. In late stages, consult a dermatologist to see what treatments may be suitable for you [3].

## LONG-TERM HAIR LOSS

Hair loss can also be a sign of other health conditions or deficiencies. If you are concerned about excessive hair loss after following preventative methods, see your primary care provider or dermatologist. Hair loss can be caused by imbalances in hormones, such as with thyroid imbalances [4] or as found in polycystic ovarian syndrome [5]. Hair loss could also be due to deficiencies in nutrients, especially vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency is theorized to increase hair loss [6], and this is likely to be more prevalent in Muslim women observing the hijab. Recent literature has demonstrated that Muslim women observing the hijab are more likely to have a Vitamin D deficiency [7-8], likely due to reduced skin exposure to the sun, which may contribute to increased hair loss.



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# RESTORE YOUR HAIR HEALTH

## while wearing hijab



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While hijab itself does not damage your hair, many practices around the hijab may. The first step in restoring your hair health is identifying any underlying deficiencies or hormone imbalances (ex. Vitamin D deficiency, anemia, or thyroid dysfunction) and any practices that may be damaging your hair. Reversing these underlying causes is critical in both restoring and maintaining the health of your hair. If you are concerned about hair loss/thinning, make an appointment with a dermatologist for blood work and an examination of your scalp.

## PART 1: PREVENTING FURTHER DAMAGE

### Fabric Matters



Synthetic fabrics like nylon and polyester are more likely to cause friction and mechanical breakage. These synthetic materials are also thought to generate an electrostatic charge that inhibits hair growth [1]. Natural fibers, like cotton, are gentler on the hair. Wear a cotton underscarf when wearing a synthetic fabric.

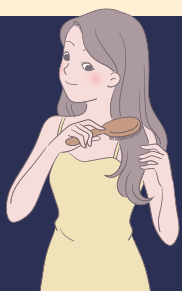
### Avoid the 'wash and wrap'

Wet hair is more likely to be damaged by mechanical breakage, such as rubbing from harsh hijab fabrics [2]. Wrapping your hair up tightly in a bun and then putting on a hijab makes your hair more prone to breakage.



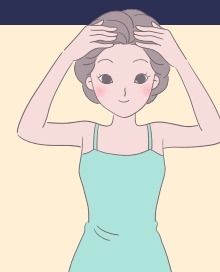
### Let it loose

Keeping your hair tied up puts tension on your roots that if strong enough can even lead to hair loss [3]. When you come home, let your hair loose and massage your scalp. Scalp massages improve circulation to the hair and help release sebum – an oil that gives your hair its tensile strength. Scalp massages in men have interestingly been shown to increase hair thickness [4].



### Change your part

Changing how you part your hair under your hijab can help avoid putting tension on the same areas. This helps avoid a condition known as traction alopecia which arises from repeated tension in the same area [3].



### Get some sun or supplement

Vitamin D deficiency is common among hijabi women, particularly those who live in more northern communities [5]–[7]. Vitamin D is an important modulator of hair growth [8] and a deficiency has been associated with hair fall in young women [9]. Spend some time in your own backyard getting some sun (with sunscreen on to benefit from the vitamin D without the skin damage risks). If you cannot, vitamin D supplements are available over the counter.



Inspiration taken from voilechic writer, Yusra S.



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# RESTORE YOUR HAIR HEALTH

*while wearing hijab*



## PART 2: RESTORATION

Over the past few years, many treatments have become popularized in the media, here is a summary of some of the efficacy of these treatments, particularly ones advertised to Hijabi women.

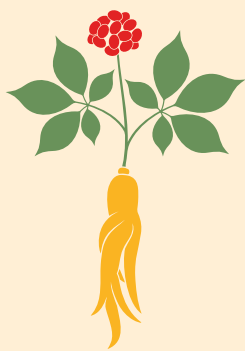
### Biotin

Biotin, also known as vitamin B7 or vitamin H, is a water-soluble vitamin that helps in the metabolism of fats and proteins. Biotin plays an important role in hair health and is found in meats, egg, fish, seeds, and sweet potatoes. Biotin deficiency can lead to a scaly red rash, a decreased blood pH and alopecia (hair loss)[1]. However, there is no clinical evidence for the advertised claim that biotin thickens and stimulates hair growth in the absence of a biotin deficiency [2-3]. While taking Biotin supplements is not harmful, it is unlikely to be helpful unless you are truly biotin deficient.



### Ashwagandha

Ashwagandha, also known as Indian ginseng, is a plant in the nightshade family traditionally used for stress reduction and its anti-inflammatory properties [4]. It is used as an ingredient in several nutraceutical supplements, including Nutrafol – a supplement that has been gaining popularity for its ability to regrow hair. One randomized control trial comparing Nutrafol to Placebo showed that it improved total hair counts by approximately 10% over 6 months as compared to 3% in the placebo group [5]. Evidence for nutraceutical supplements are often limited due to small sample sizes and limited diversity in clinical and cultural populations. While the therapeutic effects are not well ascertained, to date, no adverse events have been reported with use of ashwagandha extract [5-7].



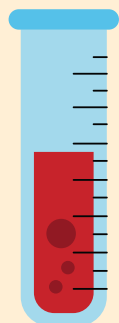
### Natural Hair Oils

The scalp has sebaceous glands that secrete an oily substance called sebum which lubricates the hair and contributes to the defense, integrity, and maintenance of healthy hair [8]. Specific grooming practices and normal hair weathering lead to a progressive loss of lipid production (a major component of sebum) contributing to a decrease in hair tensile strength and breakage [9]. The rationale for hair oils, such as amla or argan, is that they will replace these lost lipids and improve hair integrity. A trial comparing argan oil to miracle fruit seed oil showed that both were able to increase the levels of unbroken hairs steadily and continuously over an 8-month period [10].



### Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy

Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy is a three-step medical regenerative treatment that uses the patient's own platelets to trigger natural hair growth[11]. The treatment begins with the person's blood being drawn then processed and finally being injected into the scalp, increasing blood supply to the hair follicles and thereby, thickening the hair shaft[12]. PRP has been shown to be effective at increasing the number of hairs and overall hair density in patients with androgenetic alopecia (hair loss due to hormones called androgens) and is offered at private dermatology clinics[13 - 14]. While effective, PRP is expensive at \$1,000 a treatment [11].



Note: The Canada Health approved drugs, Finasteride and Minoxidil, are only used for the treatment of androgenetic alopecia.

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