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SUPER STRESS RELIEVERS FOR 2021 | THE BIG RETINOL REPORT
NORDIC BEAUTY BUZZ | GOING GRAY: THE QUARANTINE EFFECT
THE FUTURE OF FAT TRANSFER | THE RETURN OF JENNA LYONS

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WHY HAIR GOES GRAY

Let's get into the science behind it: "As hair is being formed, melanocytes inject pigment into keratinocytes—the cells containing keratin—which is the protein making up hair, skin and nails," says Wayne, NJ plastic surgeon and hair specialist Jeffrey B. Wise, MD. "Over time, melanocytes continue to inject pigment into the hair's keratin, which is where hair gets its color. In the aging process, melanocytes slow down and eventually stop secreting melanin, which causes a lack of pigment, and the hair turns gray."

According to Chicago dermatologist Dr. Quenby Erickson, going gray is programmed in our genetic code, which means we can get clues as to how extensively and when it will happen by looking at our parents. However, a 2020 study published in *Science Daily* shows there may also be a link between stress and gray hair. When testing on mice, researchers found that the type of nerve involved in the fight-or-flight response causes permanent damage to the pigment-regenerating stem cells in the hair follicle. "The study makes perfect sense," says Dr. Wise. "Stress is a huge factor in premature aging, as well as hair thinning. Naturally, it should also affect hair graying as well. There is also a lot of evidence that shows smoking cigarettes plays a role in making hair go gray earlier."

Color isn't always the only factor either; textural changes can ensue as well. "Some people are blessed with gorgeous gray hair, but for most of us, the gray is accompanied with thinning and rougher texture that leave our hair finer and harder to style," Dr. Erickson says. There are no proven ways to prevent hair from turning gray, but both Drs. Erickson and Wise have seen some promising results from platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections. "Because these treatments are aimed at 'waking up' your own stem cells, they could potentially reinvigorate melanocyte production as well," explains Dr. Wise. "We have seen growth of darker, thicker hairs on some of our stem cell therapy patients, even though the original goal was to combat thinning. Treatment results are dependent on the patient's individual conditions, so realistic expectations should be set by your doctor."

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4 WAYS TO EMBRACE GRAYS

Helpful tips to keep in mind, according to the pros:

- 01 "Using a root concealer can help your color look more cohesive until you have enough gray that it doesn't look half and half, which can take six to 12 months," says celebrity colorist Rita Hazan, who pioneered the root cover-up spray concept.
- 02 For curly hair, Papanikolas says definition in the curls is important. "Gray hair tends to be coarser and frizzier, so keeping curls tamed will create a polished look rather than an unkempt illusion."
- 03 To combat brittleness that can accompany grays, Friedman recommends using K18, "an incredible leave-in mask you can use every two weeks."
- 04 "Low-maintenance doesn't mean no maintenance," says celebrity colorist Chad Kenyon. "A good purple shampoo used occasionally can keep gray hair vibrant and shiny. Without it, the hair can become yellow and dingy." Papanikolas likes Matrix Total Results So Silver, which boosts gray hair to its brightest silver tone.

COLOR CODE

Kenyon and Hazan say none of their clients embraced their grays during quarantine, or they tried, but caved eventually. For those in camp "cover them up," topical dyes and root concealers can help camouflage. "The process to cover gray hair is the same on both blonds and darker shades, but my clients with lighter hair can go longer in between touch-ups because gray hairs blend with blond hairs more easily," says Kenyon. Friedman often suggests adding a darker pepper tone to silver hair for people who feel more comfortable being darker, but don't want the two-, three- or four-week regrowth touch-up that's needed.

For those who want to permanently cover their grays at home, Nikki Lee, celebrity colorist and cofounder of Nine Zero One Salon, recommends Garnier Nutrisse. "There are more than 75 shades and you can easily find your match using a virtual shade selector," she says. "If DIY color makes you nervous, temporary root sprays are great to use in between salon appointments."