

Guide to Scalp Massage for Hair Growth

Key Info:

- ~ Scalp massage is proven to help promote hair growth.
- ~ For best results massage scalp for at least 5 minutes each day.
- ~ Be patient - it can take up to 12 weeks for results.

Indian Head Massage or 'Champissage' is a head, neck and shoulder massage that has been practiced for generations in India to promote hair growth and good health. If you've ever had a scalp massage, you'll know how relaxing it can be, but did you know that besides easing stress and tension, scalp massage has been proven to help promote hair growth?

The reason that scientists believe scalp massage can improve hair growth is threefold.

Firstly, and most importantly, scalp massage increases circulation and blood flow. Because the scalp is at the top of your body, far away from the heart, it's one of the hardest places for blood to flow. Massaging your scalp stimulates the blood vessels beneath the skin which bring oxygen and nutrients to the hair follicles, encouraging healthy hair growth.

Secondly, according to research, scalp massage also increases hair thickness by stretching the cells of the hair follicles, which in turn stimulates the follicles to produce thicker hair. A study published in the *Eplasty Journal of Plastic Surgery* in 2016 (i) involving nine men who received a 4-minute scalp massage each day for 24 weeks found that at the end of the study, the men had thicker hair than at the start.

Another study in 2019 (ii) based on survey responses from 340 participants who had followed specific instructions by doing twice-daily scalp massages found that approximately 69 percent of participants reported that their hair loss had improved.

Finally, scalp massage has also been proven to reduce stress. A study in an October 2016 (iii) issue of the *Journal of Physical Therapy Science* found that twice-weekly scalp massage lowers levels of stress hormones, blood pressure and heart rate. Stress and tension causes tightness



in the scalp, which can restrict blood flow. Scalp massage restores pliability and relieves tension, helping to create a better environment for new hair growth.

It is also worth noting that massaging the scalp can help to loosen and remove dead cells and excess sebum on the scalp, which can hinder new hair growth. Scalp massage also helps to distribute the hair's natural oils which protect and condition the hair.

How to massage your scalp at home to promote hair growth.

Traditional scalp massage:

This is one of the easiest forms of scalp massage. You don't need any special equipment, oils or shampoo. Massaging your hair for 5 minutes every day without using any oils or shampoo is just as beneficial as using special oils- so you can literally start right now while you are reading this.

A traditional scalp massage involves the use of your fingertips only. Use the fingertips of both hands to apply light to medium pressure to your scalp, in a small circular motion. Work your way across your scalp ensuring you cover all areas.

Try to massage your scalp using your fingertips for at least 5 minutes at a time, several times a day. Be careful to use the pads of your fingers and not your fingernails.

Massage while shampooing:

Another easy way of massaging your scalp is to gently massage your shampoo or conditioner into your hair for 5 minutes using the steps outlined above. Then rinse your hair as usual.

However, for scalp massage to be beneficial it should be performed at least once a day and if you have fragile hair from chemotherapy or radiotherapy treatment, it is recommended that you wash your hair less frequently - no more than twice a week, so this type of scalp massage might not be the best for fragile chemo hair.

Oil massage:

If you have experienced hair loss from your cancer treatment, using an oil during your scalp massage can help to keep the skin on your scalp moisturised.

You can purchase treatment oils that have been specifically formulated to encourage hair growth or you can create your own oil by mixing a few drops of your favourite essential oil with a carrier oil. Many people also recommend using plain olive oil, almond oil or coconut oil - whatever you have to hand really.

Start by warming up the oil a bit so that it absorbs into your scalp better. Starting from the middle of your scalp, work the oil into it in slow, circular motions and slowly move backwards. Keep applying and releasing pressure until you cover the whole of your scalp.

Some suggested essential oils that you can use are:

- Peppermint oil helps to improve circulation and acts as a natural cleanser.
- Tea tree oil helps soothe a dry, itchy scalp and clears it of minuscule dermatitis issues.
- Chamomile oil soothes an inflamed, itchy scalp.
- Lemon oil helps with the management of dandruff.
- Almond and castor oil helps to promote hair growth.

Oriental Scalp Tapping Massage:

Place your fingers at the centre of the head and begin to tap about 30 to 35 times in one area. Gradually work your way outwards towards your ears continuing to tap each area. Then go back to a little higher up than where you first started, and continue to repeat the tapping process until the entire scalp is tapped.

Scalp Massager:

Scalp massagers are handheld, brush-like devices that can be used to give a helping hand when massaging your scalp.



Whilst you can give yourself a scalp massage with just your fingertips, scalp massagers are easy to use and can potentially help you achieve a deeper clean by getting deep into your roots - although this is perhaps only an issue if you are lucky enough to have a head full of thick hair!

It's also worth noting that you should be wary of using a scalp massager if you struggle with frequent scalp irritation, dandruff or psoriasis. Whilst rubbing a brush on the scalp might feel good to get rid of the itch temporarily, it could ultimately create inflammation and actually cause more redness and swelling.

In summary:

Loosing your hair through cancer treatment really is one of the most distressing side effects. If you decide to give scalp massage a go, no matter which method you prefer, the key is consistency and patience.

For best results you need to massage your scalp for 5 minutes at least once a day, preferably more often and you need to continue to do this for a couple of months.

Disclaimer: The above advice has been carefully collated from information and advice provided by other people affected by cancer, but it doesn't in anyway constitute medical advice. If you have any concerns, please ensure your loved one speaks to their medical care team.

- (i) Koyama T, Kobayashi K, Hama T, Murakami K, Ogawa R. Standardized Scalp Massage Results in Increased Hair Thickness by Inducing Stretching Forces to Dermal Papilla Cells in the Subcutaneous Tissue. *Eplasty*. 2016;16:e8. Published 2016 Jan 25
- (ii) English, R.S., Barazesh, J.M. Self-Assessments of Standardized Scalp Massages for Androgenic Alopecia: Survey Results. *Dermatol Ther (Heidelb)* 9, 167-178 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13555-019-0281-6>
- (iii) *J Phys Ther Sci*. 2016 Oct;28(10):2703-2707. Epub 2016 Oct 28



For more information and support

www.cancerpal.co.uk