

## Evaluating new hair loss Products

Posted by : admin on Oct 10, 2007 - 09:42 PM

Editorials

How to tell if a hair loss treatment is legitimate or not So you heard about a new treatment on the radio, or you've seen an ad for one online. Or maybe someone posts a comment in a discussion forum, and everyone is clamoring for it! How do you know what to believe? How can you know if this product really will work? Dr. Richard Lee gives several simple steps on how to effectively evaluate a hair loss treatment to make sure its worth your time...

Quite frequently, I have been asked by my patients to give an opinion in regards to a proprietary product for the treatment of male pattern baldness. (For the purposes of brevity, I'm going to use MPB in referring to male pattern baldness and female pattern baldness). A few decades ago, this would have been a rhetorical question, as there were no known medications proven to be beneficial and safe for the treatment of MPB. However, today, there are scores of products, either medications or medical devices, which have been advocated to grow hair. So, how can you evaluate the claims of a product?

### **Analyze the Ingredients!**

First of all, take careful note of the active ingredient or ingredients. Have the ingredients been proven to do whatever has been claimed in the advertisement? Are there references to studies in recognized scientific or medical journals? I innately distrust any medical product, which does not list its ingredients. I also have misgivings in regards to products that have a multitude of active ingredients, not because each ingredient may not be safe and effective. They may very well be. But there could not possibly be adequate studies to prove that all of the ingredients are compatible in the same solution or when administered together. Even with FDA approved medications there can be incompatibilities among drugs used for the same purpose, e.g. penicillin and tetracycline.

### **Does it Grow Hair, or just make it look better?**

It is also important to distinguish pharmacologic from cosmetic actions of the product. There are many products, which can make the hair 'thicker' or 'fuller', but they have nothing to do with stimulating hair growth or preventing and reversing MPB.

(Editors Note: A perfect example of this were the ProSante line of hair products for "Fine and Thinning Hair". Shaklee announced a line of shampoos and tonics that were marketed specifically to hair loss sufferers, but never actually stated it would stop or reverse male pattern baldness.

- Legitimate Proven Treatments for Men: Overview
- Legitimate Proven Treatments for Women: Overview

[IMAGE]

### **Dr. Richard Lee**

Dr. Lee obtained his degree in medicine from the University of Pittsburgh, and has founded and operated one of the few private medical practices devoted entirely to the research and treatment of hair loss.. "Regrowth" was incorporated in 1987.

Dr. Lee provides consultation services to hair loss sufferers, and has a line of custom minoxidil and topical spironolactone solutions which are widely used by our members here at HairlossTalk.com. Dr. Lee is a respected member of the HairlossTalk Community, and one of the few physicians truly educated on the causes and treatments of hair loss.

### **"Only Available Online"**

Is there a 'bricks and mortar' business site? The development and production of products to treat MPB require a physical space for such activities. If the manufacturer does not give you a street address, it should raise suspicions as to the validity of the business. There should also be a way to contact the business by phone or email.

### **Unrealistic Claims**

Although the progression of MPB can have some periods of rapid acceleration in some patients, the process is very slow and begins at puberty. Consequently, reversing MPB is also a very slow process. Products, which claim that you will see results within a few weeks, are simply fraudulent. Patients have claimed that as soon as they used a certain product, their shedding stopped. That may well be true, but the end of the excessive shedding had nothing to do with the use of the product. The shedding stopped because ~100 days ago (the length of the telogen phase), fewer scalp hairs shifted into telogen.

### **Money Back Guarantee a Guarantee?**

Does a 'money back guarantee' make the product more credible? Any marketing specialist will tell you that less than 1/3 of consumers will ever demand their money back, regardless how egregious the product might have been. In medicine (as in life), there are no guarantees. Your surgeon can never guarantee any specific result. Your internist can never guarantee the result of any particular medication. So, I always feel uneasy with money-back guarantees on 'medical' products. Likewise, I question the validity of 'before and after' pictures. They may very well be valid, but with the present technology of image manipulation, any image can be presented as visual reality. Even without digital manipulation, the sequence can be reversed.

### **Always Evaluate Efficacy and Safety**

Although we don't yet have a cure for MPB, it's exciting that many products are available for the treatment of MPB. And current research studies suggest there may be a real cure, real soon. Meanwhile, the bottom line in regards to evaluating a product for the treatment of MPB is to decide efficacy and safety. It must have both.

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