

Hair loss treatment or Cosmetic cover up?

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Consumer Alerts

Find out how to differentiate between products intended to improve the *appearance* of hair, and those that will actually stop hair loss. 90% of the products you see advertised for "Thinning Hair" are not really intended to treat thinning hair at all. The majority of the time it is just a marketing tool intended to trick consumers into buying it. Find out how to differentiate between products intended to improve the *appearance* of hair, and those that will actually stop hair loss... You've seen them, countless advertisements and web sites for "hair loss" products, but can you identify which products are purely cosmetic and which are specifically designed to promote hair growth? The distinction is not easy to make, even for professionals, and some product manufacturers intentionally blur the dividing line between the cosmetic product and the pharmaceutical drug.

What is the distinction?

Well, cosmetic products just cover up the underlying problem but do not actually treat it, while pharmaceutical drugs focus on treating the underlying cause of the condition, but make no attempt to mask the symptoms. In our case the symptom is hair loss, but the underlying cause of the symptom is, for example, androgen activity in pattern baldness. An entirely new crop of products known as "cosmeceuticals" has begun to emerge in the retail arenas. Exactly what a cosmeceutical is, is hard to pin down. In most cases they are products half way in between a cosmetic and a pharmaceutical drug. They have some modest action over the long term underlying cause of the condition, but the primary, short term objective is to help mask the symptoms. For example, you may have seen skin creams advertised on TV that claim to reduce wrinkles with repeated application and make skin look younger. These are cosmeceuticals. They are cosmetic creams that immediately improve skin texture by hydrating it, while over the long term the creams are claimed to gradually improve the actual skin structure - that is a pharmaceutical action. These two actions combined together make a cosmeceutical.

Cosmeceutical Hair Products

lotions.jpg

To give you some hair related examples, cosmetic products that hide hair loss include things like hair thickening shampoos and powders like Toppik. These products work by coating the hair fibers in some kind of protein (serum, keratin, etc.) making the hair fiber look thicker. The products do not affect the biochemistry of hair loss however. The hair loss continues, but what hair is still present is made to look better. Other examples are products that color the skin to reduce the contrast between hair and skin color, like Couvre. Even wigs can be described as a cosmetic product. So cosmetics do not modify the biochemistry of hair loss, they just reduce how noticeable the hair loss symptom is. The biochemical process that causes hair loss continues unabated.

So what's the problem?

The problem arises when you are listening to the radio, or more likely, surfing the internet and

run across one of about a thousand websites selling a product that *they* claim is "for hair loss sufferers". Technically, they're telling the truth. Any product that can help hair look thicker is best marketed to those with thinning hair. Unfortunately, many people think the slogan "Makes hair thicker" means "Grows new hair, making it thicker". They assume that thicker hair means new hair. Immediately the difference between a clinically proven growth stimulant like Rogaine, and this random "hair thickener" is lost.

As mentioned above, its important to remember, there is only one clinically proven hair growth stimulant on the market today, and that is Rogaine. There is only one clinically proven product that can actually stop or reverse male pattern baldness, and that is Propecia. It is illegal for any company to claim that their product can grow new hair, so they capitalize on confusing terminology like "thickens hair" to get sales from hair loss sufferers.

- To read the Laser comb for Men product review, go here: [Laser comb Product Review](#)
- To read the Laser comb for Women product review, go here: [Laser comb for Women](#)
- To Discuss the Laser comb with other members, go here: [Growth Simulants Forums](#)
- More info on Toppik and Couvre for Men: [Toppik Product Review](#)
- More info on Toppik and Couvre for Women: [Toppik Product Review](#)
- More info on purchasing, see the Concealers section of our [Product Center](#).

Pharmaceutical versus Cosmetic

Pharmaceutical drugs for hair loss include things like Propecia. Propecia is a drug that specifically targets the underlying biochemistry of pattern baldness. The intention here is to interfere with the biochemical mechanism that leads to hair loss. By reducing the biochemical activity in pattern baldness, the drug provides a more favorable environment in which hair can grow. Propecia has no actual effect on how the hair fiber looks or even on hair fiber production, it just reduces the androgen hormone activity so that the hair follicles have a better opportunity to grow. There is no attempt to make the hair fiber that is currently present, look better cosmetically.

The Gray Area

nizoral.jpg

In terms of treatments for hair loss, there probably aren't any true cosmeceuticals available right now. However at a stretch, things like Aminexil and Nizoral shampoo could be described as sort of cosmeceutical. They are over the counter products that may have a modest action on the biochemistry of hair loss, although probably not strong enough to completely stop the hair loss mechanism, while in the meantime they also have a cosmetic action improving the appearance of hair.

As you can probably see there is a significant overlap between these different product categories. When it comes to products for hair loss there can be considerable confusion between the simply cosmetic and products with a degree of pharmaceutical action. Many web sites and web adverts intentionally confuse the issue. The product being sold is (very often) purely a cosmetic product, but the web site or advertisement is worded in such a way to make you think that the product has a pharmaceutical action. The web sites usually don't actually state the product can reverse hair loss, they carefully word their claims to make you jump to the conclusion that it does. This is a

common marketing ploy and you will see it used for promoting all kinds of products from margarine to cars and from product manufacturers large and small.

Let's take a few quotes collected from hair loss product web sites recently:

"Promotes thicker, stronger and fuller hair"

"Your hair quality will continue to improve and stay healthy"

"Beautiful hair without side effects"

And my personal favorite:

"100% of people grew hair using our product!". Well of course they did! Everyone grows hair no matter what they do!

All of these quotes are for cosmetic products that just cover up thinning hair. The products have no action on the underlying biochemistry of hair loss. The products will not actually stimulate new hair growth, but you might easily jump to that conclusion from these quotes. Our minds like to read between the lines. We like to reinterpret statements in our favor and when you add in the emotional state some people with hair loss are in, it is very easy to over-interpret such phrases and conclude the products have a pharmaceutical action and will directly stimulate hair growth. This confusing form of advertising does not mean the product is bad in itself. Cosmetic products can be very useful for people with thinning hair. They can do a very effective job of hiding hair loss and should be seriously considered as part of a regimen to cover up the hair loss while simultaneously treating the underlying cause of hair loss with other treatments. But the advertising is bad if it makes you think you are getting a product that will promote new hair growth when it does not.

In Conclusion

There is nothing that can be done to stop advertisers presenting their products in a confusing manner and implying their products have properties that they do not in fact possess. It is down to you the reader, to be aware of these selling techniques and to critically review advertisements and web sites. What does the web site actually say? What actual claims are clearly and unambiguously stated for the products? Ignore implied properties, stick with just the facts! Make sure to differentiate between a hair loss treatment and a cosmetic product meant to improve the appearance of hair. Be objective in your reading, and you'll be an educated consumer who tactfully avoids being taken advantage of.

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