



PRESS CLIP

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Good Health

Page 23

IN THE THICK OF THINGS

By RITUPARNA MUKHERJEE

GONE ARE the days of thin and overplucked eyebrows that lend a permanent look of surprise to the face. The current fashion diktat is a pair of bold, defined eyebrows, which spell bad news for those who have plucked their brows into thin lines. "Plucking brows repeatedly causes damage the hair follicles and the hair growth becomes straggly, sparse and increasingly difficult to grow back," says Dr Hema Pant, Kaya Skin Clinic. Boldly plucked brows lose their natural shape and arch and replicating them is almost impossible.

Luckily, a host of permanent and semi-permanent procedures such as eyebrow hair transplant and reconstruction are available to restore the natural shape and arch of the brow. Apart from being useful cosmetic procedures, these are a boon for those who have lost their eyebrows for various reasons. "The absence of hair can be due to genetics, prior electrolysis or laser hair removal, over plucking, thyroid or other hormonal abnormalities, or trauma due to surgery, burns or other types of accidents," says Dr Ajay Kashyap, senior consultant cosmetic surgeon, Fortis La Femme. Some patients want to restore their eyebrows to their original thickness while others want a subtle thickening or to reduce scars which may mar their eyebrows.

DIFFERENT METHODS

VARIOUS high tech treatments can help restore eyebrows that have been plucked over the years. Hair taken from the scalp is transplanted into the eyebrows and continues to grow for a lifetime, needing trimming typically once a month. "Sometimes, the hair is removed individually from the scalp and grafted onto the eyebrow area. This is a very delicate procedure, requiring perfect placement of these hairs into tiny (half-millimetre) incisions that are angled as just the right direction and positioned to mimic natural growth," says Dr (Ms), (Gen) Avtar Singh Bath, senior consultant cos-

metic surgeon, Dr BLK Memorial Hospital. In another method, surgeons remove a strip of skin, 6-7 cm long, and 4-5mm wide from the back of the head where the hair is the softest. Each hair is then removed from this piece of skin with a needle and transplanted into tiny incisions in the eyebrow area. Surgeons might also graft entire micro-strips of skin containing mature lines of hair where the eyebrow should be. Yet another method used by surgeons to reconstruct eyebrows in accident victims who have no blood supply in that area is the scalp to eyebrow flap. A strip of skin tissue with hair and blood vessels is raised from the temple area just in front of the ear. A 'tunnel' is created from the base of this strip to the eyebrow site; strip of skin is then pulled through this tunnel and secured to the site with stitches. The grafted site develops its own blood supply and hair from this strip of skin.

QUICK & PAINLESS

PERFORMED usually under local anaesthesia, these procedures are typically 2 hours long and essentially painless. The recovery is also quick. For the first 2 to 4 days after the procedure, tiny crusts form around each transplanted hair and there might be mild redness of the area. There are few risks with the procedure, and most are those associated with standard hair transplants such as scarring and bruising. "Apart from the scalp to

eyebrow method, the others are all OPD procedures and the patients are able to immediately return to daily activities. The transplanted hair falls out at around 2 weeks, and then start to re-grow at 3 months, where they will continue to grow for a lifetime," says Dr Kashyap. "The cost of these procedures vary, but expect to shell out anywhere between Rs 20000 to Rs 25000. Some clinics also charge Rs 50 to Rs 100 per hair," says Dr Bath. A procedure typically involves the placement of 50 to 320 hairs into each eyebrow, depending upon the existing amount of hair and the desired size and density. Shaping the brows with lasers is also a procedure done by beauty clinics but is potentially risky as incorrect and unskilled technique can result in permanent damage to the hair growth.

EYEBROWSPEAK

Eyebrows are synonymous with expression. Shave them off if you want to be considered eccentric and interesting as the Mona Lisa or Whoopi Goldberg. Raise one and smile slightly if you don't believe a word of what you are hearing. Feeling flirty? Raising both eyebrows up and down quickly can be a humorous suggestion that you might want to get chatty and cosy with a member of the opposite sex.



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TATTOOING IS AN OPTION

ANOTHER solution to get well-defined, thick eyebrows is to have the brows tattooed on the forehead as Salman Rushdie's new arm candy Pia Glenn. Akin to permanent makeup, this procedure is done by using a colour pencil to draw the ideal shape of the eyebrow, followed by filling in of the outline with colour. Done under local anaesthesia or after a mild oral sedative, this is a popular procedure that has been in vogue for quite a while, says Seema Goel, MD Berkowitz Skin and Hair Clinic. "The colour only penetrates into the dermis or the upper layer of the skin and doesn't result in any scarring even though the area is a delicate one," she says. The cost of this procedure depends on the area being tattooed upon. If both the brows



need to be tattooed in full, the procedure can take as long as 4 hours, while smaller areas need 1-2 hours to tattoo. The cost of this procedure can be anywhere between Rs 1000 to Rs 8000. Dr Goel sees at least 3 to 4 clients in a month and believes that this is an increasing trend in the cosmetic industry with customers opting for it before marriage. This might be a less convenient option though, as the colour fades over time and needs to be retouched every 2 years. A hair transplant on the other hand is a permanent solution after a one time investment.

EYELASH TRANSPLANT

EYELASH transplants are a relatively rare procedure and far more complicated than eyebrow reconstruction because of the delicate nature of the eyelid. This is usually done during facial reconstruction procedures following an accident. However, doctors say that there are people who ask for options because they have lost their eyelashes. A product called Latisse which is developed by Allergan, the company that manufactures Botox, is the solution for them. When applied to the lashes, this gel-like product encourages re-growth and elongation of the eyelashes. "Even though this comes with a steep price tag of Rs 6000, this product is quite popular as it is effective and an easy solution," says Dr Kashyap.

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