

Hey there, beautiful! 🌸 Before you dive in, a quick heads-up: this transcript is a super close-to-verbatim buddy from our podcast, but it's got its quirks! We didn't call the grammar cops on it, so you might bump into a typo or two. But hey, that just adds character, right? 😊 Embrace the wild side of language and enjoy the read! Happy exploring! 🚀



Iron and Ferritin: Controlling Your Hair Loss During Menopause

Carmen Hecox: Let's talk about iron and ferritin. What is it? How can we get it and how it can affect us differently, especially during perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause.

We'll talk about the benefits and the risk.

Personal Hair Loss Journey

Carmen Hecox: In my episode ["Can You Regrow Hair After Menopause? Find Out,"](#) I talked about my excessive hair loss or shedding that began about November of 2023, and it got worse around May of 2024.

I also talked about maintaining high optimal ferritin levels of 70 to 100 nanograms, which is recommended for women who are post-menopausal and suffer from hair loss. And so, on September 17th, 2024, I began taking 65 milligrams of iron supplements in hopes to increase my ferritin levels, which were 27 nanograms on June 14th.

So, I haven't had any new lab work since I started since it's still early, but I did decide to do more research and share my findings with you.

And just a disclaimer here, please do not take any supplementations without getting lab work and consulting with your doctor.

If you feel like your doctor is not addressing your concerns, it's okay to find another doctor. But again, do not begin taking any vitamins or supplementation without consulting with a medical doctor.

Understanding Iron

Carmen Hecox: So, what is iron? Iron is a mineral that our body needs to grow and develop. Our bodies use iron to make hemoglobin, a protein in red blood cells.

Hemoglobin carries oxygen from the lungs to all other parts of the body. Having enough oxygen is very important, not just to our vital organs, but also to our scalp and hair follicles to promote hair growth. Iron is important for our muscles, bone marrow, organ function, and to make some hormones.

Iron in Our Diet

Carmen Hecox: How do we get iron through our diet? There are two types of iron that comes from our foods, heme and non-heme. The easiest to absorb is heme. I'll talk more about those later.

About 70 percent of the iron in our body goes into producing hemoglobin, 25 percent goes into storage AKA ferritin.

What are normal iron levels? Normal iron levels are between 35 and 150 nanograms. Symptoms of iron deficiency, also known as anemia: dizziness, fatigue, chest pain, irregular heartbeat, pale skin, and shortness of breath, weakness, cold hands and feet.

Ferritin Explained

Carmen Hecox: What is ferritin? Ferritin is a protein that stores iron inside the cells. It's responsible for absorption, storage, and release of iron when your body needs it.

What are normal ferritin levels? Normal ranges between 120 to 252 nanograms. The optimal range if you're like me, someone who has suffering from hair loss is between 70 to 100 nanograms. Optimal range is the best to help promote hair growth.

From what I have read, hair shedding, hair loss should stop if the cause is related to having low to low normal, ferritin levels.

Symptoms of low ferritin: shortness of breath, fatigue, weakness, irregular heartbeat, and in my case, hair loss or hair shedding.

Increasing Ferritin Levels

Carmen Hecox: How do you increase your ferritin levels? Food. Here we go. Heme iron, liver, beef, pork, venison, and lamb, poultry, especially dark meat, such as drumsticks and thighs. Fish and shellfish. Eggs, oysters, shrimp, clams, sardines, mackerel, tuna, and scallops.

Non-heme Iron: legumes, beans, lentils, chickpeas, garbanzo beans, white beans, red kidney beans, soybeans, black and lima beans, dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, broccoli, nuts like macadamia, almonds, pine and cashews. Seeds such as pumpkin, sunflowers, and flax seeds. Whole grains, white quinoa, or rolled oats. Pairing iron rich foods with those foods high in vitamin C like citrus fruit, tomatoes, peppers, can help improve absorption of iron.

Caffeine, tea, and calcium may hinder iron's absorption, so it's best to avoid consuming them when you're eating iron rich foods.

Taking iron supplements, talk to your doctor about which ones are right for you or ask your pharmacist as to which ones they recommend.

Iron Deficiency and Daily Requirements

Carmen Hecox: How does one develop low iron? Not eating enough iron, unable to absorb iron properly due to gut or bowel conditions such as celiac disease or Crohn's disease. Blood loss through menstrual cycles or internal bleeding.

Consult with your medical provider so they can run additional iron tests.

How much iron do we need per day? Adult men between the ages of 19 to 50, 8 milligrams. Women ages of 19 to 50, 18 milligrams. Both men and women 51 and above, 8 milligrams.

If your hair loss is due to iron deficiencies and you are either eating iron rich foods or taking a supplement that your doctor recommended you take, you should start to see improvements within a few months and three to six months to see notable

changes, such as on an average, hair grows between .5 and 1.7 centimeters per month. That's about 0.2 to 0.7 inches.

Risks of Excess Iron

Carmen Hecox: Can too much iron be harmful? The answer to that is yes. That is why it's very important to talk to your doctor first before grabbing your bottle of iron supplements as consuming too much iron can lead to iron poisoning.

Signs of iron poisoning could be vomiting and diarrhea, lethargy, dehydration, abdominal pain, and in some cases, death can occur.

This is why it's so important to work with your doctor. Iron studies are repeated 60 to 90 days of oral supplementation.

Iron and Menopause

Carmen Hecox: Women who are perimenopausal have a greater risk of developing anemia and having low to low normal ferritin levels due to having heavy menstrual cycles during this period versus women who are post-menopausal are at greater risk of iron buildup because we have no way of releasing excess iron.

Even though post-menopausal women are discouraged from consuming iron supplements and are steered toward consuming a well-balanced iron rich diet, post-menopausal women can still develop anemia. This is why, again, it's important to consult with your doctor as they may recommend the amount of iron you need and the best way of getting it.

Just a friendly reminder, perimenopause is the phase before menopause. It's when your cycle begins to become unpredictable, heavy bleeding, or your cycle is different. This phase can last several years. Menopause is when you have not had a cycle for one year, 12 months. And post-menopause is after menopause, one year after your last period.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

Carmen Hecox: So, if you're like me, who has a low normal ferritin level and are shedding a significant amount of hair daily. I recommend you talk to your doctor for additional testing. Obtain a referral to get a second opinion from a dermatologist and find out what can be done to salvage your hair before it's too late and before taking iron supplementations?

Because as I mentioned, if you are a woman who's postmenopausal like me, consuming more than eight milligrams could damage your organs or worse be fatal. So, I will discontinue my use of iron until I speak to my doctor. But I will continue to do what I had said previously. I will continue to use my red-light therapy, I will continue to take Nutrafol, I will continue to take, saw palmetto, and I will continue to wash my hair every other day. I will continue to use the hair topical that I'm currently using on my hair, and massaging it, because all of these things that I am currently doing have been recommended by a medical doctor.

With that said, I'd like to be honest here; based upon my research, as you saw in, "Can You Regrow Your Hair After Menopause? Find Out," it appears I've been dealing with low ferritin levels for 16 years and perhaps even longer, but I don't have any documentation to support anything beyond 2008.

But what I would tell my younger self is not to buy into any of these diets that promise amazing weight loss results. Instead, focus on eating nutritional foods that are essential to keep me healthy. The key word here is healthy because my postmenopausal body and hair will thank me.

Conclusion and Upcoming Episodes

Carmen Hecox: For additional information, please visit createthebestme.com/ep089. And don't forget to share, like, and subscribe.

And don't forget to come back next week as our guest will be the owner and founder of award-winning supplements, Udo's Choice, Udo Erasmus. Udo will discuss Omega 3, 6, and 9 oils and discuss the importance of focusing on consuming good quality Omega 3 and 6. Trust me, this is an amazing episode, and Udo will be giving our audience a digital copy of his upcoming book, "Your Body Needs an Oil Change" and a free video course, so you'll need to come back next week.

Thank you for watching. Catch you next week. Bye for now.