

# Hair loss after ileostomy surgery

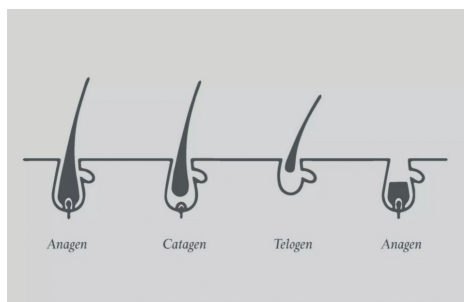
Eva Proudman, Clinical Trichologist FIT IATF



**One of the UK's leading trichologists, Eva Proudman FIT IATF, looks into the sometimes unexpected – but always distressing – side effect of post-surgery hair loss, and addresses how to boost hair health whilst navigating your 'new normal'.**

The hair follicle is the second fastest dividing cell in our bodies and as such is easily affected by changes in gut health and diet. Coupled with the fact that our bodies deem the hair to be 'non-essential', all too often our hair can be the first place that reflects adverse changes to the body.

First off, it's important to understand how the hair grows and, moreover, it's this 'repeating cycle' that is most often affected by diet and gut health.



## The five phases of hair growth

**Phase 1:** The Anagen phase is often called the growing or active phase and is where the hair is growing most rapidly.

- The growing phase can last on average between three to five years and up to seven years in those of Asian descent. The duration of the growing phase is genetically inherited.
- Hair grows at around half to a centimetre every month and it is the growth rate along with the number of growing years that determines the length that your hair will reach.
- There is nothing you can do to change the length of the growth phase or the rate of growth.
- As we age the growing phase may shorten, so that the hair growth is slower over time.
- Around 85% of hair should be in the Anagen phase at any one time.

**Phase 2:** The Catagen phase is seen as a transitional or resting phase where the active growth phase ends, the blood supply is cut off from the cells that produce new hair. Some 3–4% of hair is in the catagen phase at any one time, and it lasts for around 10 days.

**Phase 3:** The Telogen phase is where the follicle is resting and moving up the hair shaft; around 10% - 15% of hair is in this phase at any one time. The Telogen phase rests for around three months.

**Phase 4:** The Exogen phase is where the hair is released from the hair follicle to naturally shed. We naturally shed 50 – 100 hairs daily.

**Phase 5:** The Kenogen phase: this is where the follicle is empty and a new hair forms to enter the Anagen phase to maintain the ratio of hair in each of the phases.

### Cycle disruption

This all seems very 'clever' and organised, but this hair growth cycle can quickly become disrupted due to many factors, including illness, high fever, metabolic and hormonal imbalances, stress, new or long-term medications and, undoubtedly, nutritional deficiencies.

The disruption to the growing and shedding cycle is called telogen effluvium (TE) and can be acute or chronic. In 'TE', there is a noticeable increase in hair shedding from the normal 50 – 100 hairs daily, to up to double or even triple this amount. Triggers usually happen two to three months prior to the shedding starting. An acute telogen effluvium lasts for around six to nine months when the body can naturally revert to normal. However, if the shedding lasts for longer, this is termed "chronic" as the body will not have the resources to correct the cycle without support.

One of my proudest professional achievements (since I founded UK Hair Consultants) has been the scientifically developed supplement, Tricoextra, which simply and effectively addresses the stored vitamin and mineral levels required for a normal hair growing and shedding cycle. The

recommended daily dose of Tricoextra alongside an adequate intake of daily protein will usually correct telogen effluvium.

TE often feels and looks like hair loss and, in something of a vicious circle of anxiety, can cause stress levels to

increase. But it's important to remember that with telogen effluvium no hair is lost; the amount of hair in the growing phase

reduces with a larger volume of hair entering and staying in the resting phase of the follicle. But do keep telling yourself that in most cases this is a temporary and reversible condition.

So, as well as great nutrition, the hair also requires optimum scalp health. With that in mind, I have also developed tailored shampoo and scalp care treatment to suit the individual needs of my clients and to

promote the best hair growth possible. You can find out more about our hair and scalp products at [tricoextra.com](http://tricoextra.com) and I'm always happy to answer any questions from those concerned about hair loss and scalp health, and thinking about seeking support.



## Impact of malabsorption

The many factors that can lead to an ileostomy may have already affected hair health, causing shedding and thinning. I often find when assessing clients who have undergone bowel surgery, there may also be scalp imbalances as well.

Dehydration is very common following an ileostomy – but, as the hair is made up of 10% water, it really does need the body to remain well hydrated and, therefore, drinking additional fluids will help to further nourish the hair and scalp.

As many readers will already be aware, malabsorption from one's diet can also present problems, especially for water soluble vitamins such as B12. An essential nutrient for the body, B12 supports the production of healthy red blood cells, the normal functioning of the nervous system and

DNA synthesis. And for the hair, it is responsible for maintaining and regenerating follicles. Low levels of B12 can cause hair shedding and thinning.

Vitamin B12 is found in oily fish, meat and eggs, and dairy such as milk, cheese and yoghurt and can be fortified in cereals and plant-based foods. Supplements can also be helpful in maintaining a good mid-range level of this vitamin for optimum hair health.

Fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K) can also be depleted due to the body struggling to reabsorb bile acids which leads to fat malabsorption.

The hair follicle has a receptor for vitamin D which supports the hair staying in the growing phase and regenerating new hair follicles. The hair also requires micronutrients such as copper and zinc which are easily depleted following surgery due to malabsorption and loss in the ileostomy effluent.

So, again, now might be the time to consider a daily supplement which will help to support your diet in replacing some / all of these depleted vitamin and minerals, whilst also providing some much-needed reassurance at an already tricky time. Remember, you're not alone and there are some simple steps you can take to help keep your hair looking full and healthy.



## Seek professional guidance

At a recent media event, I was honoured to meet broadcaster, campaigner and ostomate, Adele Roberts, and it was wonderful to chat about some of the issues which affect people post ileostomy and beyond. She was so generous with both her time and knowledge and gave me such an insight into the concerns so often experienced relating to dietary constraints, as well as overall wellbeing and self-esteem.

One of my key hair loss ‘mantras’ is make sure your diet is packed full of protein – but my conversation with Adele reminded me that this is often not possible and that many of my ‘go to’ sources of protein such as pulses (beans, peas, and lentils) are just not advisable and that a “rainbow diet” (full of colourful fruit and veg) may also need to be limited. It’s all about working out what works best for you and how to comfortably build those essential elements into your diet – and a registered trichologist (who should always recommend specialist blood tests and analysis at your first appointment) will be able to guide you.

In summary, my advice when preparing for an ileostomy and post-surgery is to remember that you may well see more hair shedding than is normal for you – but please, don’t panic! There’s no reason that we can’t manage and treat your hair health. As always, I

recommend seeing a trichologist for a consultation and accurate diagnosis so that you can get the best support and individual treatment plan that will optimise your hair and scalp health.



### About the author

*Eva Proudman FIT IATF is one of the UK's most recognised and respected consultant trichologists. Eva diagnoses and treats*

*clients across her network of clinics for myriad conditions. A Fellow of both the Institute of Trichologists and the International Association of Trichologists, Eva is a ‘go to’ source of expert comment for UK and global media and is well-known for her award-winning product range for at-home hair and scalp care. She also advises on research and clinical product development and is the star of TV's highly acclaimed The Hair Loss Clinic.*



*Eva has helped many patients along their recovery journey in the months and years after being treated with drugs such as chemotherapy (which can cause total hair loss followed by gradual regrowth) and those who have experienced radical surgery, such as ostomy, as they seek to rebuild their confidence alongside their physical healing.*

**For more information, advice or to book an appointment, please visit:**

**[www.ukhairconsultants.com](http://www.ukhairconsultants.com)**