

# Men's Health

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## Homegrown Hair

Skip the snake oil and save your failing follicles with this three-step plan

► **Step 1. BUY CHEAP MINOXIDIL.** It doesn't matter if it's CVS brand or Walgreens, generic minoxidil is FDA approved to help grow hair. Pick up the 5 percent Extra-Strength variety, but trash the enclosed spray applicator. "You'll end up spraying most of your dosage on your hair instead of your scalp, and it won't have its full effect," says Ivan Cohen, M.D., a professor of dermatology at Yale University. "The medicine dropper allows you to get the product directly onto your scalp." And if you fertilize post-shower, towel your head off first. "If there's too much water, the solution will be diluted, and it won't work as well," says Dr. Cohen.

► **Step 2. PRETEND YOU HAVE DANDRUFF.** We know, you need hair to have dandruff. But a recent study cited in *Dermatology Times* showed that balding men who lathered daily with 1 percent zinc pyrithione dandruff shampoo for 26 weeks grew about six times more hair than men using regular shampoo. The theory? A significant number of balding men have inflamed scalps. "Low-grade inflammation can speed up the rate at which you lose your hair," says Dr. Cohen. "Using a zinc pyrithione shampoo could help reduce the inflammation." Generic dandruff shampoo with zinc pyrithione will run you \$3.

► **Step 3. ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT PROPECIA.** Also known as finasteride, this prescription pill blocks testosterone from being turned into dihydrotestosterone (DHT), a hormone that causes hair follicles to become dormant. And, unlike minoxidil, which grows hair only on the top of the head, popping a daily dose of Propecia can also put the brakes on a receding hairline—if you start taking it now. "The most important thing with Propecia is that the earlier you start taking it, the better it will work," says Dr. Cohen. "If you wait, you'll never get back to where you could have been."

—LAURA ONGARO