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HERSPERSPECTIVE
LENORE SKOMAL

Mom discovers honeymoon is over too soon

The average marriage lasts 10 years. That's a statistic I heard recently, but people must have suspected this for a long time.

Years ago, I knew a couple who entered into their marriage like a leasing contract, maintaining their option to renew after 10 years. At the time, I was very single and privately aghast at the arrangement. But in light of these new stats, maybe it made sense.

I did a little bit better than the odds. My son's romance with me lasted exactly 12 years. OK, it's not exactly a marriage, I know. He was only 5 when he popped the question. But it was one of those mother-son moments that you will carry with you to the next life. As I was putting him to bed one night, he turned his little face up to mine as I bent down to kiss him goodnight. "Mommy, will you marry me?"

I suspected this was coming. I said, "Of course I will. When you are 18 years old, honey, if you still want to marry me, ask me again." Well, he hasn't made it to 18. He can't even legally stay home alone yet. But it would appear the honeymoon is over.

Sometimes, you just don't see the end coming. It was last Friday night and we were all getting ready to head out to his school for a family sock hop. We envisioned a fun evening, one with all of us dancing and laughing.

As he brushed his hair — a startling new development signaling teenagehood — he turned to me, and said hesitantly, "Mom, I don't think I have to remind you, but please don't embarrass me tonight."

I could tell by the way his eyes evaded mine, he was not

Hair transplants booming

Women set on fighting hair loss

By AMANDA CUDA
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Maria Carlucci started losing her hair when she was only in her 20s. It made her self-conscious, but for years, she just lived with her thinning hair. Then, about a year ago, her aunt died. Her aunt also had thinning hair and, at the time of her death, was completely bald.

Carlucci, 42, took that as a sign. She decided to use the money she had inherited from her aunt toward solving her hair loss problem.

At first, the Stamford resident tried hair growth supplements, such as Rogaine, but they didn't work. Then, two months ago, she went to Dr. Ivan S. Cohen, a Fairfield dermatologist specializing in hair loss and hair transplants.

It's too early yet to know if the transplant was effective (it usually takes about six months), but Carlucci said she was glad to have an alternative.

"Hair loss is acceptable for a man, but for a woman, it's totally unacceptable," Carlucci said.

She is one of a growing number of women looking to hair transplants to remedy the effects of hair loss.

According to the Coalition of Independent Hair Restoration Physicians, female pattern baldness affects 21 million women in the United States alone.

In the past, most women felt there was nothing they could do about hair loss. But Cohen said that is rapidly changing. About five years ago, he said, his office did an average six transplants a year on women. Now that number is closer to 60 a year.

"It's a huge increase," he said. "I just think that women are a lot more aware of their options for treating hair loss."

Paul Petonito is owner of the Advanced Hair Transplant Center with several offices in the state, including those in Westport, Branford and Rocky Hill. Petonito



handles the business end of the center and oversees transplants performed by doctors at his offices.

Though he only takes a small number of clients at a time, he too has seen a larger number of women seeking treatment. Right now, he said, he's working with four different women on hair loss problems, which is a high for him.

Both Cohen and Petonito partly attribute the increase to a growing emphasis on appearance. Petonito said that, especially now that there are so many women in the work force, looking their best is even more of a priority.

"They're out in the work force at the age of, say, 50 and they have to compete with younger women all the time," he said. "They have to look good. And this is part of the looking good process."

Carlucci agrees that hair loss has been a problem for many women for years, and they are just now starting

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Tracy Deer/Connecticut Post

Spot check: Above, Dr. Ivan S. Cohen checks the progress of hair transplantation patient Maria Carlucci, of Stamford, in his Fairfield office. At left is a picture of Carlucci's scalp before the surgery. Right, a closer look at the transplant.

Hair transplants for women a growing trend

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to realize that they don't have to live with it.

"I think it's always been a problem," she said. "I just don't think that there's been any other options. Women often don't realize that there is a viable solution."

Hair transplants work by moving healthy "donor" hair from other areas of the head to the thinning areas. After the donor hair is removed, and the donor area is stitched up, an incision is made on the bald or thinning area and the "new" hair is grafted on.

Because the donor hair is genetically programmed to grow for life, it continues to grow at its original site. Throughout the procedure, the patient remains conscious and a local anesthetic is used to minimize discomfort.

Cohen said that, over the years, hair transplant technology has evolved so that the result looks more natural, which may be another reason why more women are signing up.

"The results are so much better now," he said. "People are more comfortable with the process, now that they now that

they're not going to end up looking like a freak."

There are a number of reasons that women lose their hair. Some are temporary, such as childbirth, an illness or rapid weight loss. Generally, hair lost under these circumstances grows back once the body has time to recover.

But the most common type of hair loss in men and women is androgenetic alopecia, a hereditary condition.

That is what caused Carlucci's hair loss and Erica Navisky said it may have been at least partially responsible for hers.

Navisky, 40, of Essex, had a transplant through Petonito's center about two years ago. Medication, and perhaps heredity, had been causing her hair to thin over the previous months. "My hair was pretty thin," she said. "I just didn't want to have my scalp showing."

After the transplant, and taking some herbal supplements provided by Petonito, her hair began coming back, and Navisky said she's happy with the results.

She was particularly pleased with how painless the procedure was. "It didn't hurt at all," Navisky said. "I was really excited and happy about that."

Hair transplants, however, aren't the only option for women with thinning hair. Both Cohen and Petonito provide a number of procedures for women struggling with thinning hair or hair loss.

That includes medications, such as minoxidil, which is used in Rogaine, but Cohen said that works best in connection with other treatments.

Petonito has had some success with laser light treatments, which uses lasers to treat and control hair loss. Verna Zichichi, 51, of East Haven, had laser treatments about four years ago to treat her hair loss, which had been occurring steadily for about 20 years. Before the procedures, Zichichi had bald spots on the front and back of her head and felt "very self-conscious."

Since the treatments, Zichichi feels more comfortable with herself, especially as a single woman who works with the public (she works at a car auction house). Zichichi wasn't surprised to hear that more women are seeking options like hair transplants and laser treatments rather than living with their thinning hair.

"I think more women are out in the public workplace now," she said. "They want to look their best."