



31 Hairy Tips From the Czar of Long Locks

There is, in New York, an indomitable Russian who is generally acknowledged to be the long hair *maven* to the world. His clientele ranges from the wives and mistresses of royalty (with hair to their knees) to just plain folks who are having tress trouble of one sort or another.

The man is George Michael and women have traveled halfway around the world to consult him.

His base of operations is a shiny second floor salon at 420 Madison Avenue, over which he presides with all the dash and flamboyance of Peter the Great.

He is reputed to have 36,000 clients. Most of them have long hair. Many more want to.

George Michael is not a freak. Long Hair is not a fetish with him. He knows, however, that if you want your hair to grow to your ankles you have to take care of it. His background is medical. His methods are simple and startlingly easy to follow. Individual problems are dealt with individually.

According to George Michael, the following is law:

Growth

✿ Hair grows six inches a year on everybody who is in normal good health. It never grows more than six inches a year on anybody—ever.

✿ Hair can grow up to 8 feet, never longer. (George Michael has 18 clients who have over 6½ feet of hair each.)

Shedding

✿ If you have a crew cut, you shouldn't worry about losing 87 hairs a day. If your hair is to your chin, a loss of 16 hairs a day is normal. Girls with waist-length hair should be losing not more than 2 hairs per diem.

✿ Mammals shed seasonally, but humans shed periodically at ages 26, 36 and 54. If you are 26 and feel your hair is falling out, it is probably a normal, massive hair exchange.

✿ Ovaries have nothing to do with hair growth. The thyroid gland does. Women who have lost reams of hair with their first child, but shed less with their second and third offspring, are actually victims of an abrupt change of lifestyle. The unaccustomed mechanics of caring for the first baby alters thyroid production. After a woman has had two or three children she becomes used to the routine of motherhood and changes her schedule less—therefore losing less hair.

✿ Normal hair loss after delivery (if you are breastfeeding) happens four months after delivery and lasts two months. If you are not

breastfeeding, the hair loss will happen two months and four days after delivery and last 2½ months.

If your hair is falling out—for God's sake don't cut it short. That weakens the root and makes it smaller, thereby undercutting the very foundation of your hair.

✿ The first rule for healthy hair is that it must be *ONE LENGTH*. As much as two thirds of your hair can fall out if you cut bangs because of your body's natural tendency to seek a state of equilibrium. This means that if you cut the front (or longest natural part of your hair) the back will shed or break off in an effort to equal the new length of the front.

In case you're interested, no one has ever succeeded in growing floor-length hair with bangs.

Parts

✿ Middle parts have a tendency to look fine when you are seventeen and they are hairline thin, but they grow wider with age, especially if you pull your hair back tightly. (Dame Margot Fontayne and many other ballerinas now have center parts about ½-inch wide.)

✿ The best place to part your hair is on the *right side*. Hair grows naturally from left to right, so by parting it on the right you are comb-

*M*arie Montrazzo (below right) came to George Michael 10 years ago with bangs (a definite disaster—see article). At the time she was managing a chain of hosiery and sportswear shops and had been talked into bobbing her hair by the “fashionable” buyers. She was so upset at the results of the “fashionable” cut that it was a year before she had the courage to walk into another salon. She found George Michael through his ad, which said: “If you have long hair, we love you. If you want to grow it long, we help you.”

Miss Monterazzo was so impressed with his respect for long hair, and with the way he arranged it, that she left the sportswear and hosiery business to become George Michael's apprentice. She is now vice president of his salon. She has hair to her knees, two hairs growing from every root, so that it is fantastically lush, and it has a wild natural color pattern: gray at the top and chestnut brown at the bottom. It looks like a wonderful living road map of the healthy growth and change of hair.

*F*ran Pelli (below left) is a secretary at the Bank of New York. A friend turned her on to George Michael six months ago. She came in wearing guiche (short curly side pieces). George Michael let her know in no uncertain terms that “a Cadillac doesn't need decoration.” She is now letting the guiche grow out and thinking about becoming a hair model and changing her name to Francesca.



*M*rs. Sunny Braverman (upper photo), also known as Classical Hindu dancer Anjali Devi, went gray at 15. She needed dark hair to dance professionally (who ever heard of a gray-haired Hindu dancer?). But she had had it with hairdressers who told her that they'd need a rake and ladder to dye her knee-length hair. Enter George Michael who returned her hair to its original jetlike hue, and has kept it looking and feeling great for the past 11 years. Mrs. Braverman actually likes the look of short hair, but says if she cut it, her husband would kill her.

ing against the growth and thereby creating a natural height and fullness.

Dandruff

✿ Dandruff is infectious and contagious. It should not be confused with occasional shedding of surface skin which is often the result of a lack of humidity in the air and can be remedied by brushing more or getting a humidifier or both.

✿ Dandruff *itches* and usually starts behind the ears. Sterile brushes and combs are of paramount importance to dandruff sufferers. Wash them, like your hair, in dandruff shampoo to sterilize them. A compulsive washing of pillow cases and shirts helps cut down on the possibility of re-infecting yourself.

Foreign Bodies

✿ The best material to use in or on your hair is *natural*. This means tortoiseshell combs and brushes with natural bristles.

✿ Metal can hurt your hair because it acts as a conductive element which transmits static electricity. Because it overreacts to temperature change, it is always 10 degrees hotter or colder than the air itself. This hot/cold fluctuation expands and shrinks the hair cells at the point of contact and makes the strands easily breakable.

✿ Metal hairpins and bobby pins are coated with an acrylic substance that makes them safe to use until the acidity of your hair wears off the coating. This takes about three weeks from the first time you use the hairpin, even if you can't wear it constantly. After three weeks, throw pins out.

✿ Beware of coated rubber bands if they have metal in the coating. If you have to tie your hair back, it's better to do it with tortoiseshell interlocking combs, ribbon or yarn or a leather thong.

Shampoo

✿ The root is the only part of the hair that is alive. Everyone's roots have the same alkalinity/acidity ratio: pH 2.6 (very acid.) Scalps are pH 4.6, and hair (because it's oxidized) has a 5.6 pH. The trick then is to wash your hair with a shampoo with the same pH factor as the roots—a shampoo that's as acid as possible. Then, you can wash your hair as often as you like, every half hour if that's your trip, without drying it out or hurting it in any way. Our grandmothers used to wash their waist-length hair with soap, which has an

extremely alkaline pH factor, 9. They also had to use a vinegar rinse to be able to comb it at all.

The shampoo George Michael uses and recommends is Windsor, by Helene Curtis, available only in beauty supply stores at \$1.65 for a pint of concentrate that makes a gallon of shampoo when mixed with water.

✿ Shampoo in an upsidedown position—head between knees—to keep your scalp loose. The scalp locks when you raise your elbows above your head—try it.

Don't lather on the first sudsing, which is just meant to slosh out the surface dirt. Really massage on the second sudsing; it gets your hair clean while it eases the tension in your scalp.

Combing and Brushing

✿ Hair is stronger than steel. It expands 1/8 to 1/6 of its length before it breaks. Unfortunately, if you stretch *wet* hair, it won't go back to its original length. Never brush wet hair. Separate it into 1/2-inch sections and comb it with a wide-toothed tortoiseshell comb. Work from the bottom up, combing in a downward direction until snarls are out and you can comb from part to ends without snags. (Speert's No. 15 tortoiseshell comb is perfect for this operation . . . \$2.)

✿ Static electricity is damaging to hair. Brushes with rubber bases under the bristles feed back the static electricity in the hair toward the scalp. Don't use them.

✿ Don't wear nylon or synthetic clothing while you brush, as this also increases static. If you must brush your hair while wearing nylon, stand on an eraser.

✿ Brush first thing in the morning when the blood is in your scalp. Do it in the upsidedown position you use for shampooing . . . head between knees, feet apart. Don't wear tight belts or bras or tight collars while you're brushing as they prevent optimum circulation.

✿ If you haven't been accustomed to brushing a lot, start with 20 strokes the first day and add ten strokes a day until you reach 100. Launching into an overly-aggressive brushing regime can lead to a charley horse of the roots.

Seasonal Conditioners

✿ Hair is more abused in winter than summer because temperatures differ so greatly between indoors and outdoors . . . (70° inside to -5°

out) so hair expands and shrinks violently each time you change environments.

✿ When going outside in the cold put your hair inside your coat. Winter hair is in a shrunken state so a hair conditioner with small molecules will take a shorter time to do its job. (Balsam conditioner by Wella takes 60 seconds).

✿ Summer hair is in an extremely expanded state and needs a conditioner made of larger molecules to be effective. Summer conditioners take longer to work (Revlon's Flex requires 12 minutes even though it says 20 on the package).

✿ If you swim in salt water, smearing Flex on your hair before you take the plunge will protect it.

✿ If you are swimming in a chlorinated pool, use undiluted cream rinse before you go in (Breck Pink works best). The cream rinse will also soften the water for the people who own the pool.

Red Heads

✿ Red hair is tremendously porous. Hair sprays just won't work on red hair.

✿ Be careful—don't dye your hair if it's naturally red because it is liable to grow back *brown*.

These are some of the things George Michael believes in, practices and preaches. If you have a particular hair problem that no one has been able to cure, George Michael is probably the man to see. He is generally booked to his armpits, so, if you are serious about seeing him, call or write and make an appointment a month or two in advance.

The first time you see George Michael it will be with a group of 8 to 10 other people and it will involve a lengthy, informative, instructive and sometimes showy talk about hair . . . what makes it grow and how to take care of it. Mr. Michael will then look at your hair . . . analyze your problems and trim the ends. You must come with clean hair and an open mind. Mr. Michael has very little time for people who are not about to listen.

George Michael has a great many highly-trained master hairdressers in dashing black uniforms on his staff who give consultations at \$25. But seeing George Michael himself is an infinitely more theatrical, fascinating (though slightly clinical) experience and well worth the \$40 he charges. ✿