

## Hair loss treatment centers help women in North Jersey

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THE RECORD

Balding men can be the butt of many jokes. Comb-overs and bad toupees are never-ending comic fodder. But making fun of a woman with thinning hair? That's just mean.

Sure, it's a double standard, but men can also shave their heads as an accepted choice of personal style; women don't live in that world. And while men may be bothered by their hair loss, the mental toll is worse on women.

"It's more devastating for women," says Ralph DeChiaro of JA Alternatives, a hair replacement company with an office in [Paramus](#).

Everything in life loses a bit of its luster when someone is unhappy with her appearance. For women, hair is a big part of that equation. An estimated one in four women experiences thinning hair and loses a little of herself with every strand that goes down the drain.

Maxine Craig, an associate professor in the Women and Gender Studies program at UC Davis, researched just how much hair means to women, and found it matters a lot.

"Hair is seen as a marker of gender identity," Craig said. "These are social codes that we all learn and learn deeply. When a woman loses her hair, she may feel that she is losing something that identifies her as a woman."

The stigma associated with women's hair loss is slowly disappearing. Hair-loss-treatment businesses are seeing more and more women come through the door.

For Debbie R., hats and scarves had become her least favorite and most necessary accessories for going out. Photos taken at a recent big event



CARMINE GALASSO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Debbi R. gets laser treatment at Guci Image in Paramus, one North Jersey business helping women with hair loss.

### At-home treatments

Among the options for women suffering from hair loss is the HairMax LaserComb, which just got FDA clearance for use on women this summer — four years after it was cleared for men. Hair Club, a treatment center in Elmwood Park, gives the combs to some clients to take home. While Hair Club transplant surgeon Christopher Varona says the laser dome in the office is "a little more effective," the comb does work and can be used if regular office visits aren't possible. Varona is intrigued by iRestore and iGrow — both laser domes for home use. "I'm very curious about it because there has been some mention that for things like alopecia and for cancer patients that have lost hair from chemotherapy that it's good at regenerating that hair," he says.

showed her using something to cover her thinning hair. And every morning, she would wake up to another pile of hair on the pillow. Her once-full head of hair was becoming more of a memory each day.

She researched extensions, and a desire for Great Lengths Cold Fusion extensions led her about an hour from her Pennsylvania home to Guci Image in Paramus. Once there, Joe Lore told her about Low Level Laser Therapy (LLLT), which uses a cold, red-beam laser.

Debbie decided on the extensions and the laser treatment. Only three months into her yearlong treatment, she is not only losing less hair, she is growing new hair. And Lore has seen the change in her personality that he says he sees in other women who go through the process: from withdrawn to confident and happier.

"I'm so glad I did it," Debbie said after sitting under the laser dome for her latest treatment. "It really does kind of boost how you feel on the inside."

And getting up in the morning isn't depressing anymore.

"It's really exciting to wake up with less hair on the pillow," she said.

Lore cautions that everyone is different. The LLLT dome — which is available at most treatment centers — stops hair loss in 85 percent of cases. For some of that 85 percent who have dormant, not dead, hair, it can promote growth.

When Clarice Gogia went to Hair Club in Elmwood Park, her hair loss was too far along for LLLT, and she wasn't a candidate for the implants she sought. Instead, she opted for a process called Bio Matrix, which is the company's strand-by-strand replacement.

For Gogia, 57, Hair Club was a perfect solution. She didn't like going to a salon anymore where styling didn't cover her bare spots and she felt on display.

"Everybody will see your problem," Gogia says of going to the hairdresser. "When I went [to Hair Club], I liked the privacy of how things are handled. It's one person and yourself. I feel free, and I feel not embarrassed."

DeChiaro of JA Alternatives and Hair Club transplant surgeon Christopher Varona say women should see their doctor first to rule out a medical issue causing the hair loss. The one thing women shouldn't do is hide out embarrassed, live in denial or sit around waiting for the hair to stop falling out.

"Everyone thinks it's going to stop on its own, that they're just going through something," says Lore. "But that's a very prohibitive price to pay, because you may wait too long."

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\* HAIRMAX LASERCOMB

How much: \$295-\$545

Info: hairmax.com

\* X5 HAIR LASER

How much: \$199

Info: x5hairlaser.com

\* IRESTORE

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— Kara Yorio