

## Scientists May Have Found a Gray Hair Gene

The good news? A stylist also gave us tips for hiding grays.

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For some, that first youth-ending gray hair shows up early. For others, the 40s or 50s are when they pop up en masse. Regardless, nearly everyone gets gray hair at some point in life—and the desire to stop that evidence of aging helps keep the [20 billion dollar](#) salon industry afloat.

Scientists have known for years that gray hair is tied to a [loss of melanin](#), a compound that determines the color of hair and skin. Now, scientists have added a new discovery to the conversation: a gene that may be responsible for gray hair.

The [study](#), published in *Nature Communications*, analyzed the genetics and hair properties of more than 6,000 people from five Latin American countries. They found that a gene variant typically associated with European ancestry and light hair was linked to going gray—a logical conclusion, since the towheaded likely have less melanin to begin with.

But don't panic, blondes. Researchers say the gene is probably only responsible for about 30 percent of hair-graying. The other 70 percent is caused by various influences, including age, stress, and environmental factors.

So, what's a gray-haired person to do? We reached out to Nick Penna, owner and lead stylist at Salon Capri in Boston, to find out how you can hide gray hair:

**First, accept it.** “Unfortunately, there’s no preventive way to stop gray from coming in. It’s part of aging,” Penna says. “There is really nothing to prevent hair from turning gray.”

**Then, decide what you want.** Penna advises clients to analyze what their ideal outcome is. Some may want to maintain their current look, sans gray, while others may want to try something new. “We need to determine what the client’s natural hair color is—if they want it to look like it did before they started to get gray, or [if they’re] looking to do something different,” he says.

If you don't have a large number of grays, Penna says, highlights and semi-permanent single process color may be good options. If a large percentage of your hair is gray, see a stylist about every four weeks; for fewer grays, every eight to 10 weeks is enough.

**Finally, protect.** “There’s definitely some great color-safe, prevention shampoos and conditioners out there,” he says. “They extend the length and the life of the hair color.”