

Health, beauty & fitness

Ask the pharmacist

female hair loss

ANGELA CHALMERS, pharmacist from Boots' Oxford Street store, answers your health queries. This week, female hair loss.

What causes it?

It isn't only men who are at risk of hair loss, but women's hair loss is less talked about. Men generally suffer from "androgenic" hair loss, which results in the characteristic pattern commonly seen in "balding" males (thinning at temples and crown of head). Women can also suffer from hereditary hair loss, but there are other components at work. In many cases the condition is temporary, and while the causes are not clearly known, it can be down to stress, hormonal imbalances post-

pregnancy, poor dietary nutrition, thyroid or haemoglobin problems or medication and can occur at any life stage. However, age is a key contributory factor.

What can I do?

Don't believe the urban myths: female hair loss is not caused by washing your hair too often, and shaving won't make hair regrow thicker. Mechanical solutions are also unlikely to work. Instead, many women choose to use wigs and some even have hair-replacement surgery. There are, however, less drastic solutions. Effective spray treatments are available, and basic advice like avoiding hairstyles such as tight ponytails and corn rows should help.

Products to consider

● **Boots Expert Hair Loss Treatment Spray for Women (£19.99)** can encourage hair thickening and boost condition.

● **Regaine for Women (£24.95)** can help to treat thinning hair and prevent further loss.

● **Nourkin Shampoo and Scalp Cleanser (£8.50)** gentle yet thorough, it helps provide the ideal environment for healthy hair growth.



TRY POWER KITING – THE FUN NEW

BY CLAIRE COLEMAN

Up, up and away

MARK introduces me to my kite and shows me how to unpack it and unravel it safely. I will be flying a 3.5m Ozone Imp Quattro.

This four-line kite has two power lines attached to the top, and two brake lines at the bottom. Each hand holds a handle to which one power line and one brake line is attached.

To launch the kite you slacken the brake lines and tighten the top lines by angling the handles away from you, exposing the face of it to the wind. For landing, you tighten the brake lines by angling the handles towards you so it's no longer exposed to the wind.

To stop me getting carried off, I'm wearing "kite killers", Velcro bracelets worn around the wrists that are connected to the brake lines. In an emergency, you can let go of the kite, when they pull on the brake lines and kill the power immediately.

Mark demonstrates how to launch and land the kite: it looks so simple. Yet the minute I take over, I'm nearly dragged off my feet by the power of the wind hitting the sail. Breathlessly, I quickly engage the brakes and bring it to a surprisingly graceful landing.

After a bit of launching and landing, a few instances of me being swept off my feet, and a slightly hairy moment that saw me dragged along the ground (fortunately the photographer missed that one), I think I've got the hang of it.

Now it's my turn

THE key is effectively using your body to counteract the force of the kite. That means leaning backwards, and bending your knees.

Along with controlling what you have to do to make it fly higher, and making sure you change your stance as the wind changes position, it's a lot to remember. Sort of tapping your head and rubbing your stomach at the same time while tapping your feet in time to the 1812 Overture.

But it's about to get worse because now it's time to learn the turns. You force the kite to turn by pulling the handle on the side that you want it to turn to. After a fashion I have it swooping from one side of the sky to the other — but I'm already knackered.

Aching all over

FLYING kites is surprisingly hard work. As you might expect, it challenges your upper body like no gym workout I have ever done. Biceps, triceps, shoulders, wrists, they were all working overtime to stop me flying into the air.

But it doesn't stop there; my abdominals are doing their damndest to keep me anchored, while my thighs, knees and, weirdly, ankles, are also under pressure. After an intensive 15 minutes wrestling with this wilful creature, I'm breathless.

Waking up the next day, my neck, the muscles at the top of my back and all the muscles round my ankles are particularly tender.

CURIOSITY apparently killed the cat. And, on a gusty Tuesday afternoon, in Richmond Park, I'm wondering if it might also kill the Claire. Having spotted people doing what looked like all sorts of exciting things with big kites, I am — somewhat apprehensively — on my way to meet Mark Parker, kite flyer extraordinaire.

Mark has been power-kiting for 12 years. His company, Kitevibe, is the only power kiting school in London with a licence from the Royal Parks to teach in Richmond Park.

Power kites aren't the kites you flew as a kid. These huge great sails have the capacity to harness the wind and pull with the same sort of power as a speedboat with a water-skier behind.

Hmmm. I glance doubtfully at the deer gathered worryingly close to our proposed kiting site and envisage gliding gracefully onto an antler. Mark promises that won't happen.

The basics

AFTER a quick safety briefing and an explanation of how to assess whether it's safe to fly, it's time to get started. Mark explains you should always pick somewhere that's very empty until you're expert enough to control your kite perfectly — the cables, not to mention the kites themselves can do serious damage if they collide with bystanders.

First I need to work out where the wind is coming from and stand with my back to it. My hair blowing in my face is a pretty good guide, but that might not work for those who are not quite so follically blessed.

Mark shows me a simple measure. Picking up some grass and letting it fall vertically is an easy indicator.

He then tells me to envisage an imaginary dome all around. Vertically above me and straight out to each side of me is where the kite will have the least power because a minimal surface area will be in contact with the oncoming wind.

It's straight ahead of me, at about a 45-degree angle above the horizontal, that I'll find what is known as the power zone. And I'll soon be going on to discover the reason why.

Lite lunch

FRESH! ENERGIE BOOST SALAD, (£4.25/370G)

THE bento-like box contains steamed salmon in soy ginger dressing, green leaves and avocado dip, plus spinach, alfalfa and walnuts, and a green lentil, kidney bean and brown rice mix with mushrooms and peppers. It's really filling and tasty — and everything is wheat-free, dairy-free and organic.

LOW CALORIE ✓ LOW SALT ✓
LOW CARB ✗ LOW GI ✓



Health news

Choc tactics

● EATING dark chocolate every day could reduce the symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome, according to scientists. Patients in a pilot study found they suffered less fatigue when eating chocolate with a high cocoa content than with a white chocolate dyed brown. They also reported feeling more fatigue when they stopped eating the dark chocolate. Researchers at Hull York Medical

School said dark chocolate could be having an effect on the brain chemical serotonin.

Children TV alert

● UNDER-FIVES who watch two hours of TV every day are at greater risk of developing behavioural problems and poor social skills. The claim came today from American researchers who analysed data for 2,707 children after asking parents about their child's viewing habits.

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What's in my fridge?

ANTONY WORRALL THOMPSON, 56, one of Britain's leading chefs, presents Saturday Cooks on ITV1



"MY TYPICAL breakfast is usually fruit and yogurt, but when I have a bit more time I'll rustle up some porridge with fruit on top. I'll have the occasional fry-up at the weekend as a special treat. My fridge is well stocked. I always keep a good selection of cheeses, so lunch is often buffalo mozzarella with juicy ripe tomatoes and a little basil or red onion and some extra virgin olive oil. I love salami and serrano or Parma ham. I'll often put that together with spring onions, radishes, gem lettuce, boiled beetroot, cherry tomatoes and grated carrot. Top that with some grated apple and a few nuts and you have a really crunchy salad. Supper is normally something grilled. A few days ago, I prepared some mackerel with crushed new potatoes and a medley of carrots, courgettes and mange tout — it's a more tempting way of getting the children to eat vegetables with us! I don't snack much in the day, but I drink a lot of tea and have a sweet tooth so I always have some Splenda close by — it's fantastic, because it tastes like sugar, but only has a fraction of the calories."



Nutritionist Fiona Hunter says: FRUIT and yogurt is a good healthy breakfast. Porridge with fruit is even better, as it provides slow-release carbohydrate which will help balance Antony's blood sugar levels and keep snacky hunger pangs at bay. But after breakfast things seem to go downhill. The combination of cheese and cold meats makes lunch a high-saturated fat affair. Although Antony eats a good selection of vegetables in his salad he really needs to add in some carbohydrate: quinoa, brown rice or bulgur wheat would be good choices. By supper, nutritionally speaking, Antony is back on the straight and narrow. Mackerel is a great choice, it's a very under-used and underrated fish and an excellent source of omega-3 fats, which are good for the heart and the brain. Artificial sweeteners are okay but Antony should really try to train his taste buds to enjoy foods and drinks that are less sweet.



HEALTH CRAZE THAT WILL TAKE YOUR FITNESS LEVELS TO NEW HEIGHTS

A workout that will fly by



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT KITE FLYING

- **FIREWORKS CORNER**
Mill Hill shop selling recreational and power kites and kiting accessories. kitecorner.co.uk
- **LONDON BEACH STORE**
On the Costa Del Notting Hill, you'll find a wealth of kite kit for all conditions. londonbeachstore.com
- **BRITISH POWER KITESPORTS ASSOCIATION**
All you need to know about power kiting, including insurance to protect you and those around you. bpka.co.uk

The next level

ONCE you have learnt how to control a four-line kite properly, you can knock yourself out (possibly, literally) with a world of traction kiting options. In plain English, that means where you're using the kite to drag you along. There's kiteboarding, where you strap your feet onto what looks like a skateboard. Then you can try kitesurfing, with something very much like a surfboard; snowkiting, with either skis or a snowboard; and even the crazy world of kitebuggying, where you sit in what looks like a

go-kart. While snow-kiting appeals — using the kite to help you ski uphill not only sounds like great fun, but it must also be the best queue-jumping technique I've ever heard of — the prospect of being let loose with a four-line kite without Mark's supervision fills me with horror. I think I may need another few lessons before I'm confident enough to embark on it solo. First, to give me a taste of what I could be doing, Mark lets me piggyback on the back of his buggy and unleashes the awesome power of a 7m kite — the bigger the kite, the more powerful it is. Size, in this case, is everything. We

fly across the field and Mark performs the sort of sliding turns that joyriders in stolen Ford Fiestas can only dream of. Being so close to the ground feels even faster than the 15mph I thought we were doing. Then Mark confides he has pushed it up to about 55mph. This is absolutely exhilarating, and I'm only the passenger. Now I truly understand the phrase "as high as a kite..." ●Kitevibe's range of lessons includes a two-hour four-line kiting session, £55 per person including insurance and equipment hire. Call 020 7870 7700 or 07866 430979, or go to kitevibe.com

Blown away: Claire strains her every muscle as she struggles to control the power kite in her beginner's session



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