

Hair aging differs by race, ethnicity

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While aging is an unavoidable biological process with many influencing factors that results in visible changes to the hair, there is limited literature examining the characteristics of hair aging across the races. Now a new study describes the unique characteristics of hair aging among different ethnicities that the authors hope will aid in a culturally

sensitive approach when making recommendations to prevent hair damage during one's life-time.

Among the findings: [hair](#)-graying onset varies with [race](#), with the average age for Caucasians being mid-30s, that for Asians being late 30s, and that for Africans being mid-40s. Caucasians and Asians typically experience damage to the distal hair shaft, while African-Americans see damage occurring closer to the hair root. Postmenopausal changes include decreased anagen (active or growing) hairs in the frontal scalp, lower growth rates and smaller hair diameters.

Similar to skin, hair aging comprises both intrinsic aging, which includes the natural physiological changes that occur with time, and extrinsic aging, or changes associated with environmental exposures and physical stress caused by daily grooming.

"Despite a similar chemical composition, the structural properties of hair vary between different ethnicities and, consequently, the aging of hair differs as well. As the population ages and becomes more diverse, it is of greater necessity to understand the hair aging process in different types of hair," says corresponding author Neelam Vashi, MD, associate professor of dermatology at Boston University School of Medicine and director of the Boston University Cosmetic and Laser Center at Boston Medical Center.

The researchers performed a literature search among 69 publications to review what is known about changes in hair structure over time, focusing on the differences in hair aging according to ethnic background. Information regarding hair structure, aging characteristics and responses to extrinsic damage together with differences between races and ethnicities was collected.

According to the researchers, the role of hair for both protection and

cosmetic improvement makes it incredibly important to ones' physical and mental well-being. "A thorough understanding of the unique characteristics of hair aging among different races and ethnicities is essential for the appropriate management of mature patients," adds Vashi.

More information: Mayra B. C. Maymone et al. Hair Aging in Different Races and Ethnicities. *J Clin Aesthet Dermatol*. 2021;14(1):38–44.

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

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