

When you grey well before your time

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Nidhi Bhushan



It is believed that grey hair is a sign of wisdom. But for youngsters who find themselves greying, it's nothing to feel great about. *DNA* looks into the causes of premature greying, and finds it is irreversible once it sets in.

While children her age were busy worrying about homework and report cards, 15-year-old Nalini Sharma (name changed) couldn't stop thinking about her five white strands of hair. She was looked at in amazement in school and home was no relief either — every day began with grandma's secret healing therapies.

"I was sick of people mocking me about something I was already so worried about. I didn't feel like going out with friends, I was very conscious of my looks and feared being mocked all the time," she says. Even after visiting a dermatologist, Sharma's continued to grey. "The doctors told me that stress had triggered the spread of grey hair. I used to get very worked up about my exams and other schooly [sic] stuff," she recalls. Sharma's doctors prescribed oral medication for her, but unfortunately that didn't work.

Today, at 27, Sharma worries little about her hair, "I know I can't do anything about it, so I do my best to carry it off. To some extent, I manage just fine," she says with a smile.

The main causes of premature greying is a thyroid imbalance and a deficiency of vitamin B. "Most of my patients are deficient in the vitamin B12. It is our genes that our faulty. So, if your mother has a thyroid problem or is deficient in B vitamins, you have a high chance of having to deal with those greys," says Dr Sachith Abraham, a dermatologist at Manipal Hospital. "And, stress is a trigger that switches on that particular gene in a person. Though medicines might reverse greying in some people, most of the time the situation is irreversible. The only solution is to use a hair dye."

Although doctors say that they don't think there's a direct link between greying of hair and smoking, a report published in the *British Medical Journal* provided a link between smoking and premature greying. This can be attributed to the fact that the toxins in cigarettes can not only cause damage to hormones, but to hair follicles as well.

"I don't think there is any link between the two. I think people who are stressed, smoke, and hence have premature greying of hair. Stress can be a trigger, but smoking being directly linked to premature greying is not something I'm convinced about," says Dr Abraham.

Dermatologist, Dr Aruna Govind, feels that premature greying among the youth is a burgeoning problem because of the rise in stress levels in the workplace, schools and in the home.

She says: "The youth is under tremendous pressure these days. Even premature greying of hair, a result of this tension and stress, causes stress. The sad part is that once their hair starts greying, reversing it is next to impossible."

Stress produces an extraordinary tension in the scalp, which interferes with the supply of vital nutrition necessary for the health of the hair, thus resulting in grey hair. Bad hygiene, dandruff, use of a blow drier, etc, are other reasons for premature greying.

The true secret to looking young is to not stress about it too much. Also, be more careful about your hair if your dad has that patch of grey.

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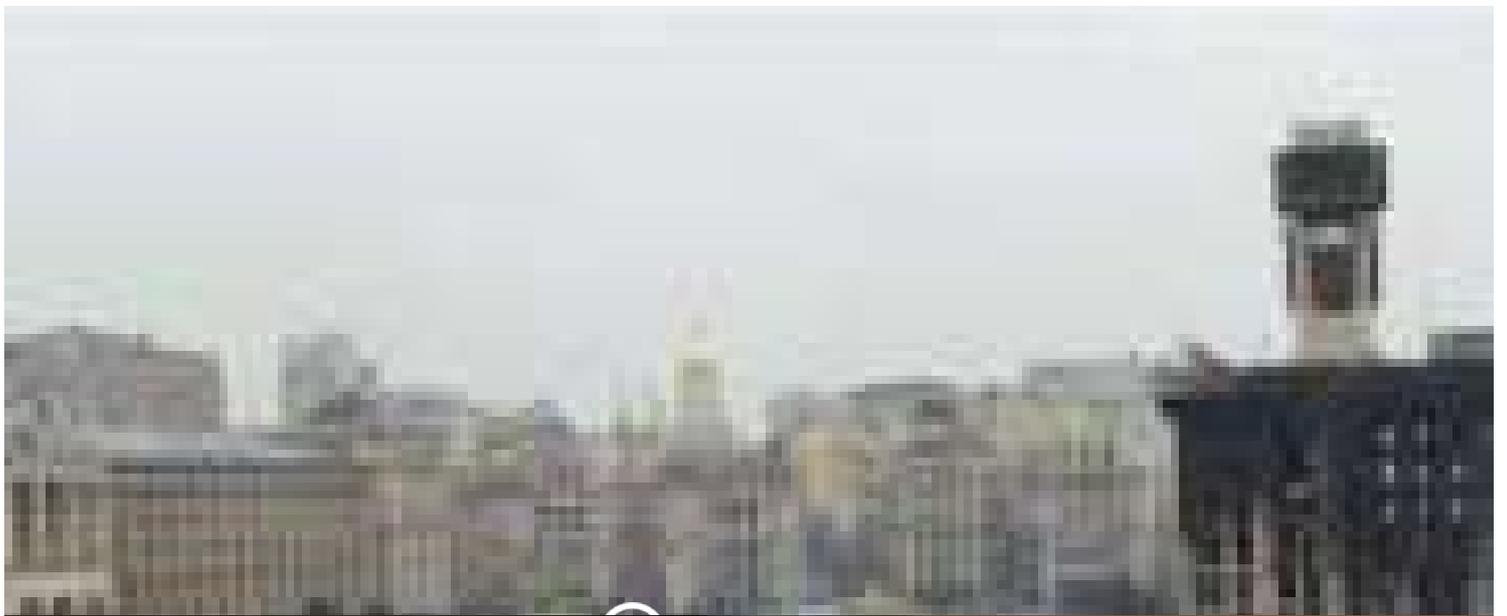




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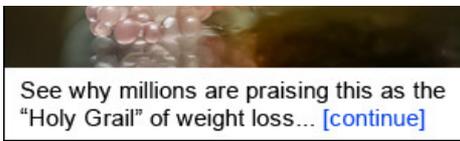
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