



1006: Addressing the Root Causes of Gray
Hair Naturally With Faraz Khan

Child: Welcome to my mommy's podcast!

Katie: Hello and welcome to the Wellness Mama Podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com, and I am back today with Faraz Khan for round two. If you missed our first episode, we tackled how to combat thinning hair. And in this one we dive deep on the topic of gray hair. Which I admit is not something I have personal experience with yet and grateful for seemingly good genetics here. However, it's something I will potentially encounter in the future. I actually love, love the idea of having white hair one day. However, not everybody wants to have gray hair or to gray early. And he dives into what are some of the root causes of graying hair. Especially early graying and what can be done about it.

I think you'll learn a lot of this, I certainly did. And it turns out that a lot more is in our ability to affect change than I would've thought when it comes to when and how much our hair goes gray. So let's jump in and learn from him now. Faraz, welcome back. Thank you for being here again.

Faraz: Thank you for having me, Katie.

Katie: Well, if you guys missed it, we had a really amazing first episode, really deep diving into the root causes of hair loss and how there's so much in our control that we can do to not just reverse this, but really like improve in such a dramatic way. And you shared your personal story and amazing results as well as I feel like some really not well known tips that seemingly make a tremendous difference.

So that is linked in the show notes. If you guys missed it, highly recommend listening. And in this one, I'm excited to learn about a topic that I know relatively little about and am excited to know more about, which is the topic of gray hair. And I would guess there is a genetic component here, and I'm thankful that I have seemingly, hopefully good genes in this category.

But I have people in my family who don't, and my kids may not have the best of genes when it comes to not getting gray hair early. So I'm guessing there's a lot that goes into this as well. But what are some of the things going on when people get gray hair?

Faraz: Yeah, totally. So there's the premature gray hair that happens early, and then there's the regular time that you go gray. And the regular time for most folks is, Caucasians will start to go gray in their mid thirties, generally speaking, and Asians will start to go gray, late thirties. And then the African American or Africans, globally will start to grow gray early to mid forties.

So that's how it plays out in terms of going gray. We don't know why, but maybe there's more pigment to begin with. That could be a reason. But science has not proven one way or

the other. Now, premature graying happens when you go gray earlier than you know your time. So let's say you're supposed to go gray, mid thirties. Based on the studies of the populations, and you're going gray, when you're 25, that is certainly premature hair graying. And so there's many reasons why you could be going gray prematurely. One of them, or I'll list a few of them, there's some risk factors. If your parents went gray prematurely before their time, then that's a risk factor for you, mother or father.

It can come from both sides. If you have, or if you drink a bunch of alcohol, which a lot of kids do early on in life, then that puts you at risk factor for going gray early. There's also smoking and pollution that plays in. So if you're smoking or you're using a lot of beauty products that have, you know, these iffy ingredients in them that can damage your scalp, for example, or damage your hair, that can cause gray hairs.

There's the presence of chronic disease. If you have something going on, inflammatory or chronic, that can also cause premature gray hair. Of course, stress is always a factor. In everything with hair loss, with gray hairs and just with the body in general. And so if you are higher stressed, at that time in your life, then you could go gray hair early.

And then a couple of interesting ones. If you have a higher education, so if you got a master's or a PhD or you got an MD, then the risk of you going prematurely gray is high. And then finally, I think age, which, not age, but your height, which threw me off. If you're taller, then you tend to go gray early as well.

So those are very interesting factors, a lot of which you cannot do a lot about, but especially with stress in particular, that seems to be a common thread across many of these. And then of course, chronic disease, you can kind of address that. You have some control over it. But coming back to your original point, Katie, the, when it comes to genetics, we believe about 20 to 25% of gray is controlled by your genetics, but you have quite a few levers you can pull to kind of at least delay your grays. Nobody has beaten gray hairs yet, but we can delay a lot of them.

Katie: That's good to know that genetics do play a role, but potentially a much smaller one than a lot of people might think. And of that list that you gave, at least a lot of those things are within our control. Like we get to choose if we smoke and drink. And stress we're all apparently dealing with in the modern world.

I think that one's gonna be a constant journey for many of us. But what could happen, like if we are willing to address these factors A: what does that look like in addressing them in a way that's tangible and that actually can have a measurable impact on the rate at which someone goes gray and or like, do these things actually help stop graying?

Can they actually reverse gray? I know I've, I've heard of cases of this. I haven't, I have no direct experience here.

Faraz: Yeah.

Katie: But I'm so curious and what's happening in the hair itself or in the body that's causing the gray? Like what is actually the shifting in the body that makes the hair gray in the first place?

Faraz: Yeah, I love that. I love that question. So let's start with the last one, which is what's happening in the body that's causing your, at your normal time or even prematurely, but what's really causing the grays to increase and go gray? This is the one mechanism. So hair growth and gray hairs are kind of linked together because when the hair cycle starts, both of these stem cells have to link up together.

And so it's interesting that we lose hair pigment earlier than we lose hair, which is like we both, we probably know people that are in their eighties or nineties that have a full head of hair, but they're all gray. And so what causes your body or to go gray, you know, at thirties or forties? As opposed to keeping your hair all your life. And there's a few reasons why we go gray. And the first one, the most important reason why we go gray is because of hydrogen peroxide. And what happens in every cell of your body is that your mitochondria are producing energy. And as a byproduct of producing this energy, they create these particles called ROS or reactive oxygen species, which is actually very damaging to the mitochondria itself and damaging to the cell.

And so your body obviously has mechanisms that then clear this out pretty quickly. And there's this two step, there's two step mechanisms. So the first step clears the ROS into something, into hydrogen peroxide, and then there's antioxidants that the body makes, like glutathione and catalyze that take the hydrogen peroxide and convert it into water, which is harmless. But as with anything, and as with aging, as we get older, the amount of hydrogen peroxide starts to pile up in our cells because there's not enough antioxidants to clear them out. And so when that happens, then the hydrogen peroxide starts to damage the cell and especially the pigment cells, and then they cannot do their job, and therefore your hair starts to go gray because the pigment is not being produced.

So that is the main reason why most people go gray. The second reason is that there's high stress levels. And these have been shown in experiments at Harvard University to increase your gray hairs because they increase the hydrogen peroxide levels. Interesting fact also with stress is that there was one study they did where they found that a high amount, a very high amount of stress can cause norepinephrine to get activated, which is a neurotransmitter which is connected to your scalp. Or it's in your scalp and it's connected

to the stem cells, the melanocyte stem cells, which are the pigment producing stem cells. So if for some reason you have very high amount of stress, for a short amount of time, this norepinephrine can excite the stem cells for the melanocytes and cause them, all of them, to differentiate and become cells.

So you completely lose the stem cell niche, which, you know, every time your hair grows, those get converted into a few monocytes or pigment cells, which keep creating pigment. But this could be stress can cause all of them to come in and there won't be any more stem cells left. Which means that after that hair growth cycle, the next cycle will not have any pigment at all because this, those stem cells are gone. So that's rare though. It doesn't happen a lot. There is this Marie Antoinette syndrome of the late French Queen who was imprisoned and executed. And people, some people say that she went gray overnight. Well, that is physically impossible because your hair is dead. You can't color a hair that's already out of your hair follicles or that's already out.

And so you cannot gray, you cannot go gray overnight. It has to come with time as hair grows out. So that's the stress aspect of it. And of course, with environmental factors, as we talked about, using the wrong beauty products, drinking, smoking, or other products that you're applying in your skin even that can cause graying.

And this includes bleaches, this includes dyes. So the way that you are able to dye your hair is also hydrogen peroxide, unfortunately. And what happens there is when you're applying hydrogen peroxide to your, to your hair and to your scalp, it damages some of your scalp, which can ironically cause you to go gray faster because your cells are getting damaged. So that's something to kind of think about. And then what was surprising to me, Katie, was also homocysteine levels.

If you have high homocysteine levels, this can cause increased amounts of gray because this prevents glutathione from clearing out the hydrogen peroxide. It reduces, glutathione in your body. And so it's simple to kind of, you know, address the homocysteine. But most people don't know they're high in homocysteine. And so that's one other thing. And then the last thing I would say when it comes to gray hairs for root causes is the radiation. And this could be either from sun, this could be from DNA, but most of us are not getting x-rays on our scalp very often.

So that's not a huge factor. But if you're sitting out in the sun for long periods of time without protecting your scalp, then that could cause ionizing radiation, which could damage the DNA of the melanocyte stem cells. That could cause you to go gray faster. So those are some of the root causes we can get into. You know, what results can you expect, et cetera, if you want.

Katie: Yeah, that was definitely some factors that I didn't know about. And I'll say like, on a personal level, not advice at all, but the one I'm willing to take as a risk factor is the sunshine. For all the other reasons, I'm a huge fan of sun exposure, so I'm like, and I also look forward to the day when I have white hair.

I feel like I've earned it with six kids. However, I know a lot of people don't wanna rush into that, and I'm already almost 40 and have zero gray hairs, so I will not be rushing, I guess, if I get there one day. But how does one slow down or reverse gray hairs, especially if someone's graying early and doesn't want to be, and doesn't wanna just be putting chemical dyes on their hair for the rest of their lives either?

Faraz: Yeah, that's a great question. I love what you say about the sunlight. It's so important. We're hiding at home all day long. We're not getting enough sun. I totally get that. And that's why most of us are deficient in vitamin D. And the question a lot of people ask is, what is the Goldilocks zone? Like, how much sunlight should I get versus how much not?

And I think typically getting a little bit more is better than not because we're not getting enough in today's day and age. But, so the question is like, what do we do? How do we reduce this? Right? And then the earlier question you'd ask is, how much of a difference can I see? So typically if you're less than 30% of gray, if you're the early stages of going gray, then you can see some results from your efforts.

The results would be twofold. One is you slow down the existing rate of going gray, so you will see less gray hairs every six months than if you did nothing. And then two, you will see a decrease, a substantial decrease in the amount of gray hairs on your scalp. This will, of course, take a few months because you'll see new darker roots growing in as time goes on, but within 90 days, you can start to see darker roots.

And how much will you reverse if you're less than 30% gray? As I said, you can have good results. I'm not saying you'll go back to dark hair, but you can result, you can, you can reverse quite a bit of your gray hairs at that point. But if you're more than 30, 40, 50%, it's gonna be tougher because it's, you're almost, you've lost the pigment, you've probably lost the stem cells.

You've probably lost the pigment producing cells from melanocytes. And at that time it might be more difficult to get that back. So if you're early on in the graying process and luckily for you, you're not even there, you haven't even started, then this can really have a good effect on you. And so the way to do this is you want to, one, you wanna reduce the stress levels.

Because we see stress as a through line through so many of these issues, including hair loss and gray hair. So we wanna balance your stress levels. Anything you can do at home, you know, walking out, getting some sunlight, getting some grounding, getting some meditations in, that'd be great. I do all of those.

And I also take, you know, some ashwagandha plus L-theonine, those can help balance as adaptogens can help balance the stress levels in your body. So that's a twofold approach you could do for the stress. In terms of making sure you're not in a high and inflammatory state, well, you wanna have, take, maybe eat anti-inflammatory foods or you could even try supplementing with curcumin, or something of that nature which reduces inflammation in your body.

Interestingly, people taking anti-inflammatory drugs have reported in some cases going, you know, reversing a lot of their grays, which miraculous to researchers at that time because one, they were not looking for a gray hair reversal. They were just trying to reverse inflammatory conditions in the body. And these were people that were older that you would not expect them to reverse their grays. So something about these individual use cases, this is not widely, widely known, but some of these individual use cases were able to reverse their grays with anti-inflammatory meds.

I don't wanna use anti-inflammatory meds and I'm sure most listeners don't either. But if we can do that naturally, then that is something that can help us improve, or reduce your chances of going gray early. But also help maybe, you know, fight some of that as well. And then of course you want to address all the root causes. So you want to address anything that can help, you know, reduce the damage to these stem cells, reduce your oxidative stress, add or increase antioxidants in your body.

So there's very good antioxidants that are cheaply available like vitamin C, alpha lipoic acid. Even spermidine is a compound that's really well starting to gain a lot of traction as an anti-aging amine, polyamine. And so that is something that is very interesting to us. But there's natural compounds that you can take, in a supplement and or serum form that can help balance all the, all the five root causes of graying hair.

And that's the approach that I recommend. But before we even go there, it's like we wanna make sure we're doing everything. Cleaning out the medicine cabinet, cleaning out, you know, the beauty supplies to make sure it's all clean. We don't have any chemicals that we're putting onto a scalp. I would urge caution with hydrogen peroxide, bleaching of the scalp if you can. And also just, you know, reducing your stress levels. After the basics are done, then we can start to incorporate a supplement or serum combination that helps address all these root causes even further.

Katie: Amazing. And I know that just like with the hair thinning, that you have done a lot of work to develop products specific to this so that people don't have to go search out all these things individually or address them one by one. Can you share what you've created with this and how quickly it tends to work for most people and or like, are there any other things to do within that protocol that are helpful as well?

Faraz: Yeah, yeah, totally. Great question. So this is a quick story I wanna share. I am good friends with Dr. Sandra Kaufman, who has written two books on longevity and anti-aging. And so you know, we would talk all the time. And I was in Miami, I believe this was in 2022, early 2022, and we were having lunch, and then we were walking to her hospital where she worked. And I remember this day because this was an intersection we were standing at and I go to her, I'm like, Sandy, you've done all this research on how to, what the pathways of aging are and how to slow them down and how to reverse them using nutraceuticals or supplements.

Surely there's a pathway for gray hairs, and surely there's one person that can find the answers, that's you. Because she's an excellent, excellent researcher, just like locks herself up in her, she calls it her closet, but it's a room in her home in Miami. She just locks herself up and just researches for weeks and weeks. Goes to Google Scholar, looks at all the scientific studies, and then just maps out all these pathways of how things are happening in the body.

And that's how she wrote her anti-aging and longevity books. And so she said, Yes, there's gotta be a pathway. Let me go find it. So she goes into her closet, so to speak, and then a month later she calls me. She's like, okay, I figured it out. I've got all the evidence that there is available at this moment, on the interwebs and with the research studies on this.

And so here's how it works, right? So she laid out all these root causes. That's how I learned about them. And then I asked her for help in creating supplements and serums that addressed all of these root causes directly. And so that's what happened. As a result of that collaboration with her and all of her research, we pulled together a supplement and serum combination that we believe is the most effective on the market when it comes to delaying your gray hairs, but also reversing your grays.

So the way that you want to use this, of course, as I said, you want to do the natural stuff first at home. Lower your stress. Make sure you're eating an anti-inflammatory diet. Make sure you're not harming your body, with, you know, these beauty supplies that maybe, that maybe have these bad ingredients.

And then after that, you wanna address and add on the supplement and the serum that go after the root causes of gray hairs. And so that's the products that we came up with. We

also have a 90 day bundle for both of those products that you can buy together for three months. And typically for gray hairs, it will take two to three months for you to see darker roots coming in. So I urge you to take these, you know, to use these products for at least 90 days to see results. A lot of people do see results. And again, we offer the same four month money back guarantee for the anti-grays as well. So try them out. If for any reason it doesn't work for you, then you can return the products and we will refund your money.

I am not gonna come to your home to ask you, did you use the products every single day? Were you compliant? That's not my business. We're here to help and I would ask that you do your best in being compliant and using them as much as you can, but there are certainly gonna be no checks on how many days out of the 90 days you use these products.

Katie: Amazing. Well, just like I said with our other episode on hair thinning and how to encourage healthier, thicker, longer hair, naturally, I'm excited to try those products and I'm excited to have these available. It sounds like there is a preventative aspect that's really important as well, and that there's also some overlap, which I think is really cool.

It makes sense of like supporting our stress levels, our nutrient levels, our all these things help in both categories. And for people with specific pain points, you have very specific solutions to each of those that people can try. And I'll of course make sure that is linked in the show notes.

People can find it and I know you have offered a special discount specifically as well as that money back guarantee, so I'll make sure people can find that easily. If you are listening, soon after this episode airs, you can also find those links on social media right now. But this has been really enlightening.

I didn't even really realize that gray hair was something we could do much about beyond genetics. It makes sense now that you've explained it and I know for many people this is something that is very top of mind for them. So I love that you've created a solution here. Any parting advice or things we didn't get to talk about that you wanna leave the audience with?

Faraz: Yeah. Thank you Katie. This hair loss and now gray hairs. I've struggled with hair loss for 25 years and my mom gave me the gift of hair loss and I really resented her for many, many years because she gave me this gift and it got in the way of everything. It got in the way of me getting a girlfriend.

It got in the way of me living my best life. I just felt so constrained by this problem. And I really, once I figured out the answers for myself and for a few friends, and now for a lot of people, thousands of people that are using our products, I just felt like it is an opportunity for me to give back.

And so that's why we have this four month money back guarantee. We wanna make sure we take care of you, because I've been through the, through the worst of it in many ways. Not taking away from anybody's experience, but in my own personal story, it was pretty bad. And so that's why if you use the code WELLNESSMAMA you'll get 15% off on all products. If you want to buy the anti-gray bundle as well, to try it out, we will also throw in a full size collagen for free. That we are throwing in with the other bundle. It's an excellent product. I think it's the best collagen on the market, but I'm just here to serve. And if there's any feedback on the products that you know, you're like, oh, it's a little bit this or that, or the other, just reach out to us.

And if you say you came from Wellness Mama or Katie, you heard us on Katie, then we'll take extra, extra special care of you. So thank you very much for having me on the show, Katie.

Katie: Oh, well thank you and thank you so much for being here. This has been as always with you, such a fun conversation. I hope we get to have more in the future. For today, thank you so much for your time.

Faraz: Thank you.

Katie: And thank you as always for listening and sharing your most valuable resources, your time, your energy, and your attention with us today. We are both so grateful that you did. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of The Wellness Mama Podcast.