

Standardized Scalp Massages

Literature Excerpt

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- *Note: the following excerpt details directions for the standardized scalp massages (SSMs) to which all survey contactees were exposed. The SSMs described herein were modeled after scalp massage therapy-responding individuals from May 2014-September 2015. Directions for measuring progress with photographic assessments are also included.*

Standardized Scalp Massages

A Step-By-Step Massaging Guide

When it comes to mechanical stimulation, it's critical that we utilize all three *[approaches]* to help encourage regrowth:

1. Massaging
2. Skin stretching
3. Acute Inflammation Generation

To maximize our use of each element, we do the following:

1. Divide our scalps into three segments. For each twenty minute massage session, we focus on just *one* scalp segment.
2. For each twenty minute massage session, we allot a specified amount of time to *just* massaging, *just* skin stretching, and *just* acute inflammation generation.

The scalp segments - and the pinching, pressing, and stretching techniques - are covered in the video. For now, here some general rules and principles for the massages:

General Rules For Each Massage Session:

1. **FIRM FINGERS.** Whenever you're pinching, pressing, or stretching - plant your fingers firmly against your scalp skin. This means that when your fingers move, so does

your scalp skin. In other words, don't drag or rake your fingers against the scalp and create friction. The idea is to manipulate the skin, not scratch your head.

2. **SHORT FINGERNAILS.** Keep your fingernails relatively short. I like to do my pinches and stretches with the pad of my thumb and the pads *or* nails of my pointer and middle fingers (see the video). Using your nails is fine... But if your nails are too long, they can often snag and rip out hair during your massages.
3. **SHEDDING.** It's typical to see some shedding during the massages. Even without pattern hair loss, we tend to lose 100+ hairs daily. It's part of the natural hair cycle. When we massage, many of our hairs that would've fallen out during the day tend to get knocked out during the massages. This can be alarming, unless we recognize that these hairs would've fallen out unnoticed throughout the course of the day anyway. Typically, I saw hair fall from between 10-20 hairs per massage session. The amount of hair fall per session depends on your overall hair density. Some will have more, some will have less. But with that said, **massage-induced shedding should not lead to visibly thinner hair**. If the massages are making your hair look visibly thinner, that's an indication that you're going too hard, creating too much friction, and / or need to re-evaluate your technique.
4. **MICRO-WOUNDING / HEALING.** I can't stress this enough. A major component of these massages is inflammation generation and *healing*. People forget about the healing part. The reason we divide the scalp into three sections is because 1) it allows for a more focused, dedicated approach, and 2) it gives us greater recovery time for each scalp section. Let me explain that last part. We have three scalp sections. We focus on one scalp section per massage session. We're doing two massage sessions per day. That means if we're correctly spacing out our massages (12 hours apart), then for any scalp section, we have 36 hours to recover before we massage that section again. That's plenty of time for recovery, and it prevents one of the most common mistakes made: too much inflammation generation and too short of a healing window. Try to stick to this system so that you give your scalp the time it needs to recover.

Now, let's cover the basics of each massage session:

A Typical Massage Session

1. **3 MINUTES - WARMUP.** Begin the session with a general warmup massage of the *entire* scalp - back, front, top, sides, and even forehead. Firmly plant your fingers and palms and slide the scalp skin across the bones. Press and pinch your skin all over. Give your hair a gentle tug. Do whatever feels comfortable to get the blood flowing to your scalp. After three minutes, it's time to transition into our focus area for the session... Either our hairline, our vertex, or our scalp sides. See the video for more clarity.
2. **6 MINUTES - PINCHING.** Use your thumb pad and your pointer and middle finger pads *or* nails to pinch the scalp skin, sometimes lifting the skin in areas that are more pliable (your sides and nape of the neck). The idea here is still to create inflammation, but more at the *skin-level* and less so in the deeper tissues of the scalp. There are two types of pinches - a single-handed pinch and a double-handed pinch. Depending on your scalp elasticity, you'll want to adjust your pinching techniques to maximize efficacy. See the video for details on pinching types and techniques for each scalp section.
3. **6 MINUTES - PRESSING.** Use your finger pads, palms, and/or knuckles to press hard against the scalp and generate a lot of downward pressure. The objective here is to create acute inflammation in the deeper tissues of your scalp skin. Strong, firm pressing. See the video for details on pressing techniques for each scalp section.
4. **5 MINUTES - STRETCHING.** Use your thumb pad *or* nails and your pointer and middle finger pads *or* nails to stretch the scalp skin. Firmly plant your hands, press down, and stretch the scalp skin, holding the stretch for 1-2 seconds each. Just like pinching, there are two types of stretches - a single-handed stretch and a double-handed stretch. See the video for details on stretching types and techniques for each scalp section.
5. **REPEAT TWICE DAILY** (once in the morning, once at night), totaling 40-minutes of massaging per day (two 20-minute sessions). Try to space out your sessions 12 hours apart, but don't worry if it's not perfect.

During and after a session, what should you look for to gauge if you're being effective?

What To Look For During / After Each Massage:

1. **Increased scalp elasticity.** The pinching, pressing, and stretching are all meant to simultaneously increase the elasticity of your scalp. If you have pattern hair loss, you might notice that the sides of your scalp are more pliable and much easier to pinch than your vertex, upper temples, and thinning regions. If you feel the scalp of someone with no hair loss, you'll notice that they generally have equal elasticity all across the scalp - on the sides, top, back, and vertex. We want to achieve the same! In the first few months, *everyone* doing the massages should noticed increased elasticity in their thinning regions. If you don't notice this, you're probably not going hard enough.
2. **Slightly erythema (pink or reddened skin).** This is an indication of acute inflammation generation and increased blood flow to the scalp - both of which we want to induce in order to clear away scalp fibrosis and soft tissue / vessel calcification. Slight erythema is what *everyone* should see after massaging. If you don't see it, you're probably not going hard enough.
3. **Increased sebum release.** During and after the massages, many people report that their hair feels and looks oilier. This is sebum release. Remember: *[one investigator suggests]* trapped sebum might explain why skin in balding regions is thicker. As such, some increased sebum release during the massages is normal and often expected. For myself and others, sebum release tended to be more drastic in the early months and more muted toward months six and beyond.
4. **Increased dandruff release.** During and after the massages, many people report seeing scalp skin flakes in their hair and on the floor. This is dandruff, and it's also a part of the normal massage process. *(Note: while increased sebum and dandruff are often reported, not everyone who sees regrowth experiences them. If you're not getting either but feel you're doing everything right, don't worry about it.)*
5. **Cradle cap.** Some readers pinched their scalps quite intensely, and their skin formed light brown scales / scabs resembling that of cradle cap (if you don't know what it is,

[Google Image](#) it). 10-20% of readers reported this, including [JD Moyer](#). It's not necessary for regrowth, but it's common enough to make it worth mentioning.

Watch The Technique Video To Confirm You're Massaging Correctly

Please be sure to watch the accompanying video. The pinching, pressing, and stretching techniques are covered there, in detail, and for each scalp segment. And if you're interested in a summary of all segments and techniques covered, here's the table from the video:

| <u>HAIRLINE</u> <u>~20 min</u> | <u>VERTEX</u> <u>~20 min</u> | <u>SIDES</u> <u>~25 min</u> |
|--|--|--|
| Warmup (3 min) | Warmup (3 min) | Warmup (3 min) |
| Pinches (6 min) -double-handed -single-handed | Pinches (6 min) -double-handed -single-handed | Pinches (6 min) -single-handed |
| Presses (6 min) -knuckles | Presses (6 min) -knuckles -fingers | Presses (6 min) -palms -knuckles |
| Stretches (5 min) -double-handed | Stretches (5 min) -double-handed | Stretches (5 min) -single-handed -double-handed |
| | | Scalp Ridge (5 min) -pinches |

Rotate Your Massage Session Focus Segments

It bears repeating: rotate your scalp segment focus areas! There are three scalp segments: the hairline, vertex, and sides. We're spacing out our massages each morning and night. Here's a schedule of what that looks like:

| | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 |
|---------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Morning | Hairline Focus | Sides Focus | Vertex Focus |
| Evening | Vertex Focus | Hairline Focus | Sides Focus |

If each of our massages are roughly 12 hours apart, then once you work a focus area, you'll have 36 hours to recover before you work that focus area again. This allows for plenty of healing.

Remember: The Massages Are Adaptive!

As you massage, your scalp elasticity will slowly increase over the course of many months. Don't rush to make your scalp more elastic and faster. As you progress and your elasticity increases, you'll be able to go harder on the scalp and recover more quickly. But when you're first starting out, don't over-exert yourself. Ease into the massages over a few months. Allow for ample recovery time. And after a few months, when you start noticing significantly more elasticity, go harder. If your scalp recovers as quickly as before, you've found your new intensity.

A Note On Intensity

If you feel like you're knocking out too many hairs during each session, then it's probably the case that you're doing your *presses* too hard or too aggressively. 80% of the time someone mentions they're losing too much hair during the massages, I review their technique and notice they're going too hard on their presses. There are two workarounds:

- 1) Instead of using your knuckles for pressing, switch to your finger pads only. You can't apply as much downward force with your fingers, so you'll naturally lighten the pressing. Decrease your pressing intensity until any above-normal hair shedding during the massages subsides.

2) Skip the presses all together, and instead just divide your time between pinching and stretching. You can generate a good amount of redness and acute inflammation with the pinches alone, so don't worry about missing out on part of the therapy.

Massaging - Questions & Answers

Here are some of the most commonly asked massage questions.

What does the regrowth look like?

Readers reported two different signs of hair regrowth. The first - and most commonly reported - is an increase in thin, white hairs that begin sprouting in thinning areas. These hairs are called vellus hairs. They eventually grow longer, turn the pigment of healthy hairs, thicken, and match the look and feel of non-thinning hairs.

But some readers reported no vellus hairs at all. Instead, they reported the emergence of thin, pigment-matching hairs that eventually thickened and resembled the look of non-thinning hairs. Here's a photo example submitted by one reader. You can see the emergence of small black hairs at the bottom of the "+3 months" photo.

+1 month



+3 months



Finally, some readers reported that - in both cases of regrowth signs - hair sheds sometimes took place, meaning that sometimes their new hairs fell out and then regrew thicker and thicker over a series of hair cycles before finally turning terminal and permanent. This wasn't the case with everyone, but it also wasn't uncommon. If you're noticing that some of your new hairs are shedding - don't be alarmed. It's sometimes a part of the process.

Some people's new hairs just continued to grow, thicken, and darken without any shedding, but it all depends on the person.

When can I expect to see regrowth?

Everyone varies. The most realistic expectation I can set is to not expect hair improvement (thickening or regrowth) until months five or six, with hair growth slowly progressing thereafter. In my experience working with readers, that's the typical timeframe.

I'm four months in and am seeing a few new hairs. Am I on track for full regrowth by month ten?

It sounds like you're on the right track. With that said, hair regrowth is a long game. Given that it takes infants over half a decade to grow a head of hair, and that it takes adults decades to lose it, the fact that we can see major recoveries in under a year is remarkable.

Some people see visible results quickly and within a few months. Most people need at least the full ten months to achieve satisfying results. And many people cite continued progress (thickening and regrowth) beyond the one-year mark.

Personally, I started seeing thickening around month five (of massaging correctly), and then slow signs of vertex regrowth thereafter. This past year, I've also seen some slight thickening, even though nowadays I probably only massage once every other day.

The key is to track progress so you know you're heading in the right direction. It often takes five months to see any progress at all. And beyond that, slow progress is normal. With that said, if you're massaging regularly and are noticing, after a couple months, that you're still receding or thinning, you might want to re-evaluate your technique, or your diet / lifestyle / other pieces of advice available in this book.

I'm getting a ton of sebum / dandruff release. Do I leave it on my scalp?

You can use isopropyl alcohol wipes to wipe away any excess sebum or dandruff during and after the massages. This will help your hair look less greasy after a session, and maybe even limit the reabsorption of newly released sebum. I don't have any preference for brands. I didn't wipe away excess sebum or dandruff while massaging, but some other readers did and found the isopropyl alcohol wipes very helpful.

I'm a few months in and my hair feels dry and brittle. Why?

Over time, the massages seem to downregulate sebum production. Slightly less sebum production isn't a big deal, but in some cases, too little sebum can lead to hair that feels more dry and brittle since there's less lubrication. If you think your hair feels too dry or if it your hair begins to break and fall often, then lay off the massages for a few days until your hair feels better. With a few days' break or easier massage sessions, sebum secretion should eventually return to normal.

Instead of two sessions daily, can I just do one long 40-minute session per day?

Maybe, but I don't advise it. We split out scalp into segments, and the time between sessions and scalp segments gives us enough time to recover from the acute inflammation we induce. Changing your routine to one big 40-minutes per day session might be okay, but it also might not be as effective, and you almost might risk narrowing your scalp's recovery window to the point where the massages are less effective.

My hands are hurting. What should I do?

Take a break! This is commonly reported. Your hands will get stronger as you continue the therapy. Start the massages back up again in a couple days when they feel better.

I'm a few months in, and now when I massage, my fingertips go numb. Is that bad?

This happened to me and a handful of other readers. In all cases, the numbness was reversible and went away after taking 3-7 days off. So take time off to heal. During this period, you can instead just focus on the pressing aspect of the massages and use your palms. Or you can take the time off entirely. If you take a week off, it's not the end of the world.

Small blemishes are showing up after I massage. Is that bad?

This is normal. It's something I sometimes experienced along with many others. But interestingly, it's something that's reported more from massagers who choose not to undergo the dietary or lifestyle recommendations. If you develop a little acne or blemish, you can go easier or massage around it until it goes away.

If I massage more, do I speed up my regrowth?

Absolutely not. A huge part of the massages are inflammation generation and *healing*. If you massage too frequently, too hard, and too long, you shorten your healing window. If you continue this for months without ever letting your scalp finish healing, you risk chronically “acutely” inflaming your scalp. This tends to slow down the whole hair regrowth process, and in some cases, even be counterproductive.

If you want to invest more time into your scalp, invest it into inversions or the Tom Hagerty scalp exercises (more on both later). These exercises improve blood flow without promoting inflammation, making them great complementary exercises to the massage.

I have regrowth. Do I have to keep massaging for the rest of my life?

Since seeing thickening and regrowth, I don't massage nearly as often. In general I work in a massage session once every other day. But I've also gone multiple weeks without a full session, and I haven't seen much (or any) regression at all. Other readers have reported the same. This leads me to believe that, as long as you work in a session every once in a while, your results should be here to stay.

If I start the massages and simultaneously stop using Rogaine, will I shed?

In most cases, yes. I certainly shed when I stopped taking Rogaine after seven years, then started massaging. It's part of the downside of these kinds of drugs — once you stop taking them, you often lose whatever hair you might've gained.

This doesn't mean those hairs are irrecoverable. And doing the massages doesn't necessarily mean you have to stop using Rogaine. If you aren't opposed to Rogaine or Finasteride and you aren't experiencing or have worries about their potential side effects, you can do whatever you want.

Can I combine the massage and low-level laser therapy (LLLT)?

Please see the FAQ chapter for a more detailed answer. The short answer is, probably.

Can I combine the massages and the dermaroller?

Yes, but my advice is to try the massages first without dermarolling. In my personal experience, I find that for most people, the massages are more effective than dermarolling.

If after eight to ten months you're not happy with your results - *and* you've followed the book's regimen, troubleshot with the advice in the FAQ chapter, and given the massages an honest effort - then you're a good candidate for either a dermarolling-only approach, or a dermarolling + massage approach. I've written guidelines on what I've found to be the most effective dermarolling + massage regimens in the Appendix.

Final Massage Advice

Stick to the Plan!

I often get asked how anyone has the time to do this, given the minutes of commitment each day. I have heard more than once:

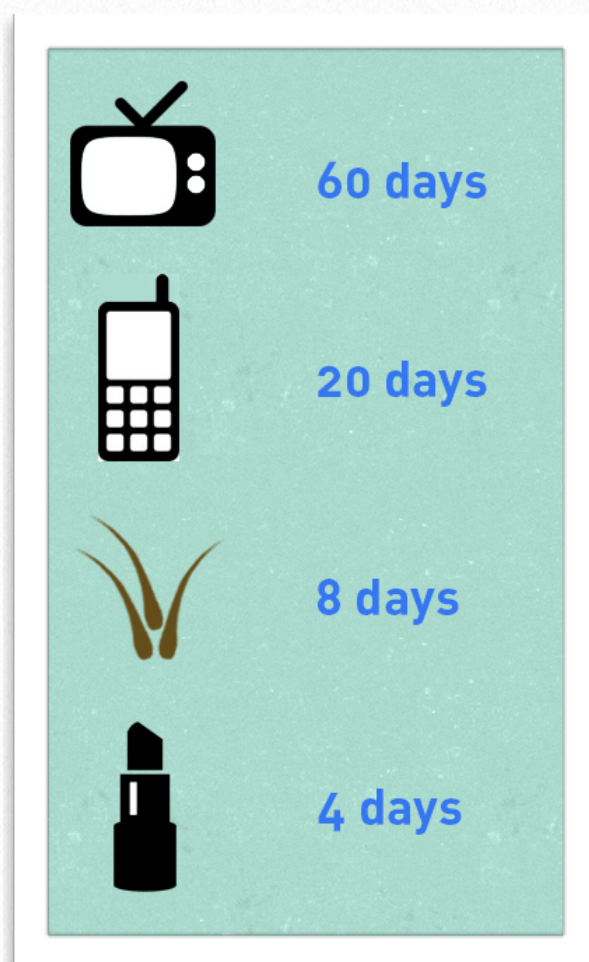
Question: How will I ever find 40 minutes out of each day to do these exercises? This therapy is impossible to execute.

Well, you'd be surprised at how much time you spend doing things that are exceedingly arbitrary.

For instance, the average Briton will spend [23 days a year on their phone](#). The average American [watches 34 hours of television](#) each week. And a recent [study](#) suggests women spend nearly 4.5 days each year putting on makeup.

If you follow these exercises for 300 days, your total time investment would be ~8 days. Eight days for regrowth? In perspective, that's not much time at all. [...]

For more perspective, let's look at the amount of time the average first-world person spends doing other things **over the same 300 day period:**



If you can find the time to watch 60 days of television, you can find the time to massage your scalp. Some readers also reported results in as little as 15 minutes twice per day

when simultaneously making the dietary and lifestyle recommendations in the following chapters. The best part is that when you achieve results, they tend to be permanent - so long as you work in a session in every other day (or minimize the factors that cause scalp calcification and fibrosis in the first place).

When And Where To Do Your Sessions

Here are some ways people have reported to me how they got their sessions in:

- Right after waking up and before falling asleep (becomes built into your daily routine)
- While watching TV (this is really the easiest... people watch a lot of TV)

Don't Get Discouraged

As you begin these exercises, don't get discouraged. This approach is scientifically validated, and personally validated by me and many others. If you're not seeing progress after eight or so months, please troubleshoot by re-reading this chapter, re-watching the videos, or diving into the FAQ chapter to uncover what might be the issue.

[...]

Measuring Progress

Take Before-After Pictures

Lastly, I can't stress enough how important pictures are. [...] What's the best way to gauge hair regrowth? Photos. As you progress, find a well-lit place to take monthly photos to gauge progress. [...] Pictures not only give you the motivation to keep working at regrowth, but they are also an excellent way of tracking progress. I recommend taking before-after photos when starting the program.

[The following excerpt is also included as free content on the website...]

“Whichever Regimen You Choose, You Have To Track Progress

Certain treatments tend to work better for certain people. You'll never know if something is working for you unless you track your progress.

The reality is that you can't feel your hair growing. And aside from the scalp itch that coincides with pattern hair loss, you can rarely feel it falling out.

The best way to honestly assess your treatment's efficacy is to take photos.

Photos Help Track Progress, But Don't Stress About Perfection

The perfect photo comparisons must be high quality images and consist of the same angle, distance, lighting, focus, exposure, hair length, hair combing style, and hair wetness. They're taken on a consistent basis (once per month), which means once per month hair cuts, consistent access to a good camera, a room with controlled lighting, and markers for scalp placement.

If that sounds ridiculous, it is. Please don't put yourself through that hassle.

Instead, track your progress manageably.

Once per month, go into your bathroom, turn on the lights, comb your hair to showcase where you're thinning, and snap a few photos with your phone. Do this when your hair is dry. Store the photos, mark the date, and you're done.

This takes out the stress of picture-perfect comparisons, and at least give you a ballpark idea of which direction your results are headed. That's really all we want.

After four or so months, look at your photos and ask yourself one question: am I improving, staying the same, or regressing?

That's all you need to ask to see if a regimen is helping you or not.”