



back to my roots

After two decades of hating her hair, beauty writer **JESS TIBBITS** is seeking *thairapy*

Hello, my name is Jess and I'm trapped in a terrible relationship... with my hair.

I even had a Ross-from-*Friends* moment recently and decided to write a list of my hair's pros and cons. The pro column amounted to one half-hearted positive (my natural colour is okay-ish), while the list of cons was endless – my hair is very fine and very straight, it's greasy at the roots yet dry at the ends, it has a habit of falling out every time I touch my head. It's safe to say that if I could break up with my hair, I would.

Even the professionals struggle with it – I'm scarred by the memory of my first-ever (French and slightly dramatic) hairdresser trying his hardest to inject some volume with a large barrel brush and an entire bottle of Kérastase's

Volumactive spray, before throwing his arms up in frustration and shouting, "Jessica! You 'ave hair like a *bébé!*"

So I've made it my mission to get to the bottom of this unhappy marriage – by calling in the experts. If there's one man who can give me a diagnosis, it's hair guru extraordinaire Philip Kingsley, who's sorted the hair woes of A-listers including Cate Blanchett and Kate Winslet. He listens patiently to my hair case history and gives his verdict: "Sounds like it's your scalp". My scalp? "Many people don't realise the quality of your hair is totally dependent on the condition of your scalp. If you want amazing hair, you first need an amazing scalp." I never thought an "amazing scalp" would be top of my beauty wish list, but then I never thought I'd have the hair of a three-year-old at the age of 27.

Taking his advice, I head off for more

in-depth scalp analysis at London's Michaeljohn salon, where I've booked in for a Fine Hair Masterclass. Artistic director Alexandra Zdravkova quizzes me on my hair habits – what shampoo I use (Kérastase), how often I wash my hair (every other day), which styling products I use (anything with "Volume" on the bottle) – and takes a long rummage through my hair.

"The good news is, your fine hair is genetic," she says. That's good? "Yes, you have an essentially healthy scalp, you just need to work on supporting it a bit better to encourage stronger hair growth." Okay, big sigh of relief – that sounds achievable.

So why is the health of the scalp so key to the health of your hair? "Think of your scalp as soil and your hair as flowers," says Zdravkova. "Flowers that grow out of dry, nutrient-poor soil will be weak and grow slowly. The same principle applies to your hair – the healthier the skin in that area, the healthier and stronger the hair that grows from it will be. It's important to remember that your scalp is skin. Most women look after the skin on their face with gentle cleansers, serums, moisturisers and masks. You should be treating your scalp in the same way."

One treatment (Nioxin's Scalp Renew Dermabrasion) later, I leave the salon with a swishy blow-dry and a new

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respect for my scalp. I'm going to nurture my way to thick, glossy locks. I get home, clear my bathroom cabinet and start again with a shiny new line-up of scalp-improving products.

Fast-forward six weeks and I've trialled 15 different products, established a regular scalp-care routine and am pleased to report that I'm falling back in love with my hair. Okay, so I'm spending a lot longer prepping it than I used to, but I've realised that like all relationships, the more effort you put in, the more you get out of it. And seeing as I'm stuck with this one for life, I figure it's worth every minute. □

JESS'S STEPS TO A HEALTHIER SCALP

every day
WASH YOUR HAIR WITH

Prickly Pear Shampoo for Dry Scalp, £29, Touché by Flavien (beautique.com)

CONDITION YOUR HAIR WITH

Invati Thickening Conditioner, £20.50, Aveda (0870 034 2380)

FEED YOUR SCALP WITH

Initialiste Advanced Scalp and Hair Concentrate, £40, Kérastase (0800 316 4400)

once a week

EXFOLIATE YOUR SCALP WITH

Exfoliating Scalp Mask, £5.25, Philip Kingsley (philipkingsley.co.uk)

MASSAGE YOUR SCALP WITH

Essential Drops: Purifying Blend, £29.50, Shu Uemura Art of Hair (0800 633 5021)