

The Truth About Biotin



Photo: Czamy Bez / Getty

Who doesn't love the idea of popping a pill to give us gorgeous skin or hair? Sadly, just like there's no magic popper for any of the above, biotin is not the answer for Rapunzel-like tresses in record-speed time.

The truth is biotin *doesn't* even make your hair grow longer or faster (only genetics can decide that), but it *does* strengthen the hair. And with stronger hair, you have the opportunity to grow your hair longer before it succumbs to breakage. "Interesting enough, sulphur is the main mineral in hair and is very important to the strength of keratin through the formulation of disulphide bonds," says **Penny James**, a hairstylist and trichologist. "Sulphur contains Biotin, so we need small amount of biotin in the hair's chemistry to help keep the hair strong."

That being said, don't feel like you can pop 'em day and night for invincible strands. While

biotin will strengthen the hair, it can only do so much; and it might be doing it *already*.

“Biotin is found in many foods like milk and nuts, so you may be ingesting the recommended amount without having to take a supplement,” says celebrity hairstylist **Richard Collins**. Just as you don’t need a vitamin C pill if you consume enough vitamin C daily, you don’t need to supplement your biotin if you’re getting enough from your diet. And just like any other vitamin, you won’t see any improvement if you don’t have a biotin deficiency.

However, if you find that your hair is weak and prone to breakage, it’s possible you do have a biotinidase deficiency. “This is when biotin is not flowing freely from proteins in the diet during digestion,” says James. “It can cause diffuse hair loss and skin problems.”

The daily recommended dose of biotin is 2.5mg, says dermatologist and scalp expert **Dr. Rebecca Kazin**. “Like any medication or vitamin, this will vary from person to person depending on other medical conditions and overall help of the liver. Follow dosage on the bottle or from your physician.” It is possible to overdose on biotin, resulting in lower vitamin C levels, skin rashes and high blood sugar levels.

Bottom line: Popping biotin daily may or may not have a positive effect on your hair.

“Theoretically you’ll see results as it improves keratin infrastructure, but it’s unclear if this translates into clinical improvement,” says Dr. Kazin. “There is not much data regarding what role biotin plays in hair growth and strength.”

For temporary relief, use a biotin topical product, like **Schwarzkopf essence ULTIME Biotin+Volume & Vitality Daily Wonder Serum Spray (\$6.97)**. Similarly to how topical keratin works, this product fills in holes in the follicle, making it stronger and thicker. The lightweight formula can be applied to dry or damp strands. “Applying a hair product that is made with biotin will help strengthen the surface of the strands and hair will feel nourished from root to tip,” says Collins. Plus, you can’t overdose on product, right? Right!