Preventing Hair Loss During GLP-1 Therapy

A Patient Guide to Understanding Weight Loss Shedding (Telogen Effluvium) & Protecting Hair Health

> **The #1 Fact to Know: It Is NOT the Medication**
> Clinical research proves that GLP-1 and GIP medications (such as semaglutide and tirzepatide) **do not directly cause hair loss**. Hair follicles do not have GLP-1 receptors. Instead, temporary hair shedding is caused by the **speed and overall volume of rapid weight loss**, a physiological reaction known as *Telogen Effluvium*.

1. WHY DOES HAIR SHEDDING HAPPEN? (TELOGEN EFFLUVIUM)

Hair grows in continuous cycles. When your body undergoes sudden metabolic changes—such as rapid calorie reduction or fast weight loss—it enters a temporary self-preservation state:

- **Nutritional Reallocation:** The body prioritizes vital organs (heart, brain, liver) over non-essential tissues like hair follicles.
- **Phase Shift:** A subset of growing hair follicles (anagen phase) prematurely shifts into a resting state (telogen phase).
- **Delayed Onset & Dose Esculations:** While shedding typically appears 2 to 4 months after initial weight loss, **shedding can also occur late—up to 9 to 12 months after starting medication**. This delayed onset is often triggered by stepping up to higher dose titrations or because it takes time for micronutrient stores (like ferritin or vitamin D) to gradually become depleted before impacting hair growth.
- **Fully Reversible:** Telogen Effluvium does not destroy hair follicles. Once weight loss stabilizes, doses level off, and nutrition is optimized, normal hair growth fully resumes.

2. ESSENTIAL ACTION PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR HAIR

Strategy	Target / Baseline	Why It Matters for Hair
Daily Protein Goal	**At least 1.2 grams per kg** of target weight daily (e.g., ~84g for a 70kg person).	Hair is 85% keratin protein. Amino acids provide the direct raw building blocks required for follicle growth.
Pace of Weight Loss	Aim for **1 to 2 lbs (0.5–1 kg) per week** max after initial weeks.	Preventing overly aggressive caloric deficits avoids triggering the metabolic shock that shifts follicles into shedding mode.
Hydration Target	**2.0 to 2.5 Liters of water** daily (+ electrolytes if needed).	Dehydration slows nutrient transport to the scalp and increases cellular stress on active hair roots.
Key Micronutrients	Check Iron (Ferritin > 50 ng/mL), Vitamin D, Zinc, & B-Complex.	Low iron reserves (ferritin) are a leading co-factor for hair shedding during active weight loss.

3. ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- **Distribute Protein Throughout the Day:** Consume 25–35 grams of high-quality protein per meal (or shake) rather than all at dinner, ensuring steady amino acid supply.
- **Avoid Crash Fasting:** Even when appetite is suppressed, ensure you eat small, nutrient-dense meals regularly.
- **Gentle Hair Care:** Avoid tight hairstyles, high-heat styling, or harsh chemical treatments while experiencing active shedding.
- **Patience is Key:** Shedding usually stops on its own within 3 to 6 months once weight loss velocity stabilizes and nutritional needs are met.