25 Hair-Raising Facts about Hair - mental_floss List Show (Ep. 235)

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Hi. I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon. This is Mental Floss on YouTube.

1. And did you know that every strand of human hair is strong enough to hold 3.5 ounces? That's about the weight of a small apple. And because the average human head is home to between 100,000 and 150,000 hairs, that means its hair can potentially support upwards of 16 tons! But then again, it only takes a single ounce of force to pluck a hair from your scalp, if you're like - I actually got one.

And that's the first of many hair-raising facts I'm going to share with you today, in this video brought to you by our friends at Head & Shoulders.

(Intro)

2. People have been styling their hair, you know, since there have been people. Like cave paintings from prehistoric times show women and men with mud and clay and feathers and bones in their hair to pretty it up.

3. Part of the reason we wash our hair regularly is because oils collect on the surface of it, but that can be a good thing. Like in 2006, tons of donated hair clippings were dumped into the ocean to soak up oil after an oil spill in the Philippines.

4. Hair is also useful in gardening. Since 2008, organic gardeners have been using woven mats of human hair in flower beds. The product keeps soil moist while fending off weeds.

5. Terelynn Russell from Morris, Illinois holds numerous State Fair records for the longest ponytail. Her 6-foot long hair takes her an hour to blow dry, and she occasionally stumbles on it when she walks.

6. In the early 1900s, before the hand-held blow dryer was invented, men and women used to put attachments on their vacuum cleaners and use those as hair dryers.

7. There's a math theorem known as the Hairy Ball Theorem. The idea, proposed in the 1800s by the famous mathematician Henri Poincaré, used algebraic topology to show that if you take a spherical ball covered in hair and try to comb all of the hair flat, it will always result in at least one cowlick.

This theorem is also used, by the way, to support the hypothesis that every cow does have at least one cowlick.

8. Speaking of which, there's a barbershop in Colombia where balding men can get their hair licked by a cow. Sadly, cow saliva does not actually have any hair preserving properties, but you know, urban legends are strong.

Here's Captain Stubing getting his head licked by a cow.

9. In the 1970s, Florida resident Frank Smith patented his comb-over under the title "Method for Concealing Partial Baldness." His extreme variant required growing a massive ring of hair around the entire head and sweeping it over in three sections. Unfortunately, his patented comb-over never brought him the riches he was hoping for. But like any good comb-over, it looked awesome when he was out on the town - when he was waking up, you know, less so.

10. In 2007, the Pakistani army commissioned a report on dandruff among soldiers because the flakes and itchiness were such a cause for embarrassment. But in truth, half of people around the world suffer from dandruff and up to 60% do during puberty.

11. People tend to notice dandruff more in the winter. Like on search engines, dandruff cures get searched 40% more during the wintertime, but dandruff is not a seasonal issue. It occurs all year long. Plus, in the wintertime you can just say that it's snow. That's what I say.

12. Also, dandruff isn't just something that takes place on your head-- dandruff can affect your eyebrows and your facial hair too, including luxurious mustaches.

13. In 1986, baseball player Rollie Fingers, known for his famous mustache, refused to join the Cincinnati Reds because they tried to make him shave his facial hair off.

14. There's a Comb Festival held in Kyoto every year. The festivities start with some combing of hair at a shrine, followed by a parade of women displaying 1,300 years of hairstyles! They were gonna go earlier, but no one wanted to put bones and mud in their hair.

15. The mullet is known by many other ridiculous names like the Camaro Cut, the Kentucky waterfall, the yep-nope, and the Tennessee Top Hat. But despite these many American terms, the mullet is not actually an American invention. It goes all the way back to the *Iliad*, where Homer describes a warrior tribe that was business in the front, party in the back.

16. The beehive hairdo was invented in 1960 by Margaret Vinci Heldt. Margaret, who owned a little salon in Chicago, had been asked by Modern Beauty Salon magazine to dream up a futuristic hairstyle to kick off the new decade, and she envisioned a hairdo that literally reached to the sky.

17. To keep their locks in place, synchronized swimmers don't use hair spray. Instead, they use gelatin packets.

18. Also, because matching hair colors is important for synchronized swimming competitions, many blonde swimmers add coffee to the gelatin mix.

19. Coffee is just one of many strange hair routines from around the globe. For instance, the Ancient Egyptians thought if you boiled porcupine hairs and applied them to your head for four days in a row it would cure your baldness.

Wait, did someone say PORK-upine? Time to put a quarter in the pork chop party fund!

20. Anyway, Ancient Irish and Brits believed that you could cure baldness by rubbing a raw onion all over your head.

21. And the Ancient Indians believed that doing a headstand would force new hairs out of your head, perhaps utilizing the force of gravity. Of course, none of those cures for baldness really work, but the onion one sure does make your head smell good.

22. But Indians weren't the only ones who thought that touching your hair to the ground had its benefits. Islanders from the Pacific nation of Vanuatu, for instance, believed that when a man's hair brushed against the ground, it fertilized the soil and ensured a bountiful yam crop. So, the islanders started land diving. For centuries, men jumped off of 75-foot wooden towers with nothing but elastic vines around their ankles, which inspired Westerners to later invent bungee jumping.

What should we adopt from these people? Their sustainable farming practices? Nah, bungee jumping.

23. If you're trying to brush your head against the ground while

bungee jumping, it's best to wet your hair first, because healthy hair, when damp and stretched, can increase in length by as much as 30%.

24. According to the Encyclopedia of Hair, the term Big Wigs comes from Colonial America. Wig makers used to clean wool wigs by stuffing them into a hollowed-out loaf of bread and sticking them into an oven to bake them clean. Because the process caused the wool fibers to grow and swell, the wigs came out extra big and puffy. Anyway, they came out looking about like this.

25. And finally I return to my salon to tell you that human hair contains 14 elements, but the most special of them all: gold!

Thanks for watching Mental Floss here on YouTube, which is made with the help of all of these nice people. And thanks again to our sponsors Head & Shoulders for making this series possible! Thank you, and as we say in my hometown, don’t forget to be awesome.