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dye for Your Guy

The latest way to a man's heart may be through his hair. Here's how to help him say good-bye to gray.

BY JOSEPH V. AMODIO



Bill Collins, 45, lets his girlfriend color his hair. "It's like a massage!"

In our dads' day, men had it easy. A quick shave in the morning, a few slaps of Old Spice, and they were done. Today's man, in contrast, wades through a sea of cleansers, moisturizers, and styling gels. (Have you noticed how much less space you have in the medicine cabinet lately?)

Now, add hair dye to the list. It's used by one out of eight men, according to beauty-industry estimates. In 1986, male hair-color products took in between \$18 million and \$27 million; today men spend nearly four times that amount, succumbing to the same younger-is-better pressures women have faced for years. Still, most men shudder at the prospect of sitting in a salon all foiled up and smelling like chemicals, and they have nowhere to turn for comforting advice. Men's magazines don't write much about hair care, and there's no way the poor graying slob will broach the subject with their just-as-silver buddies.

That's why they need your help. According to a Clairol survey, nearly half of all male first-time hair-color users say they were influenced by the women in their lives. You may already be giving him the occasional home trim. With just a little extra encouragement, you can add a color treatment. Set the right mood, and it could even be a romantic diversion for you both.

head trip: What to Use on His Roots

All stylists concur that a salon treatment is better than at-home dyeing, because a professional can control the process, blending color in such a way that it grows out less noticeably. "I often have to fix the messes that wives make at home," says Beth Minardi, of New York City's Minardi Salon. "There's nothing romantic about orange hair."

Okay, fair warning: if you're unsure of your skills, then leave it to the pros. But for price, you can't beat do-it-yourself coloring jobs. And by assisting him in degraying, you can, at least, make sure his clothes and the bathroom tiles don't end up stained with dye. Below, some of the more popular products to choose from, available in drug- and beauty-supply stores nationwide:

Just For Men, \$7

shades: Sandy Blond, Light Brown, Natural Ash Brown, Brown, Medium Brown, Dark Brown-Black, Real Black, Jet Black

application time: Five minutes

lasts: Up to six weeks

comments: A permanent shampoo-in hair color in liquid or gel form (for coarse hair). Has conditioners that leave mustaches and beards softer and less bristly.

Grecian Formula 16, \$8.69

shades: One version that works for any hair color

application time: Under one minute

lasts: One week

comments: The old guard of hair colors, this clear liquid progressive colorant easily rinses off hands, requiring no gloves, but lots of patience. Rub it onto dry hair daily for two to three weeks, shampooing infrequently, until hair darkens to the desired shade. Important: not for use on facial hair.

Men's Choice (also available for mustache, beard, and sideburns), \$5.50

shades: Light Brown, Medium Brown, Dark Brown, Darkest Brown, Black, Rich Black, Jet Black

application time: Five minutes

lasts: Up to three weeks

comments: A shampoo-in, long-lasting semipermanent gel that uses carbonates instead of ammonia and low levels of peroxide, so hair won't lighten or redden. Comes with an easy-to-hold razor-style brush for use on facial hair.

Dark & Natural (also available for mustache and beard), about \$5

shades: Darkest Brown, Natural Black, Jet Black

application time: Ten to 15 minutes

lasts: Up to eight weeks

comments: The first hair color marketed exclusively for African-American men. The heavy chemical odor has been masked with a fresh, clean, masculine fragrance.

Manic Panic, \$9

shades: Atomic Turquoise, Cotton

"It's always nice to have someone else's hands rubbing your head," says Bill Collins, 45, a mortgage broker from Campbell, CA, who began coloring his hair last summer and lets his girlfriend do touch-ups. "It's like a massage. I love it, and I think she enjoys it too."

The key: Help him feel at ease with the process. Beauty companies recognize this, which is why men's hair color products work quickly (usually in five minutes), have straightforward shade names (no Tawny Auburn or Spiced Bronze), and are sold in drugstores next to other manly goods like shoe polish, razors, and shaving cream.

Even salons try to alleviate male apprehension: Separate men-only rooms are provided at A Cut Above outside Memphis. At Dallas's Paul Neimast Salon, first-time male clients are hooked very early or late in the day, when the place is less crowded. Lisette Attias of Piaf in Washington, DC, and Beth Minardi of Minardi Salon in New York City (who has colored the hair of stars like Matt Dillon and Brad Pitt), advocate a slow and steady approach. They gradually blend in color over several sessions, so their male clients can have time to get used to the change.

Collins started going gray in his late 20s, but he never considered coloring his hair until recently, when he witnessed baseball legends including Rollie Fingers and Vida Blue at San Francisco's Candlestick Park dyeing their hair at a pregame charity event sponsored by Just For Men hair color. After a brief consultation with a company colorist, Collins decided on the spot to give Natural Ash Brown a shot. "I told myself, 'Hey, you've lived through a lot—including a plane crash that broke your back in three places,'" says Collins. "You can handle a little hair color."

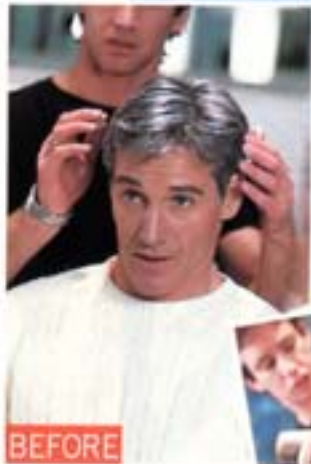
He is typical of the 45 million American men who are now entering their 40s and 50s but don't feel that old and don't want to look it. "I'm in good shape, never get sick, have great blood pressure. At heart, I'm just like a twenty-seven-year-old," says Collins. "Now, my hair matches my age."

A youthful appearance is an asset at the office, too, where many baby boomers are finding that the salt-and-pepper look, once a sign of distinguished authority, has lost its cachet. Jim Hocking, 39, a stage director and TV producer from New York City, decided to touch up his graying temples two years ago when he started interviewing for jobs in television.

"Sometimes the interviewers are in their twenties, looking at you like they are interviewing their father," says Hocking, who uses peroxide and a professional tint by Framesi. He's confident with the mixing, but admits it is nice when his wife does it for him.

"I just slap it on, but she's

If you're unsure, leave the job to a pro.



Many salons offer men special hours for more privacy. Here, Stuart Hirsch of the Pierre Michel salon in New York City transforms a client.

more careful," he says. "She has me sit in front of the window in the light with a towel wrapped around me. Sometimes, she'll highlight her hair, too, so we'll both end up running around the house with hair sticking out in every direction."

Before you pull out your own towels, we checked with color experts for tips on how to best prep for and handle the event:

1. EXAMINE HAIR IN DAYLIGHT and fan it out to get a true sense of the color before selecting a shade. Short hair can clump together and appear darker than it really is.

2. GO ONE SHADE LIGHTER when picking his shade, says Louis Licari, of the Louis Licari Color Group in Beverly Hills, CA, and New York City. "That'll diminish the appearance of gray roots and prevent hair from looking too opaque, too solid."

3. AVOID AMMONIA, says Stuart Gavert, a top colorist at the Umberto Salon in Beverly Hills and the Peter Coppola Salon in New York City. The ammonia in some products simultaneously lightens and colors, and "can leave you with brassy, orange hair when the color eventually fades."

4. TAKE THE PATCH TEST ON A WEDNESDAY. Dab a bit of tint on his inner elbow or behind an ear, and wait 48 hours to see if there's any allergic reaction. Most people have none.

5. COLOR ON FRIDAY NIGHT OR SATURDAY MORNING. That gives him a couple of showers before work on Monday, in case his skin gets a little stained. Scrub with some facial toner if that happens.

6. DON'T COVER ALL THE GRAY. Unlike women, who often get overall color, most men want a natural effect. Color where gray is excessive and leave the rest alone. Licari's secret weapon: the cotton swab. It helps to blend in color subtly.

7. REMOVE HIS SHAMPOO FROM THE SHOWER for the first few mornings, so that he will remember to just rinse, not wash, his hair. Shampoo is a detergent, which can promote fading, says Gavert.

8. LAST BUT DEFINITELY NOT LEAST, LIGHT A SCENTED CANDLE. Or two. They help to quell harsh chemical odors, but even better: They set a great mood. ★



Candy Pink, Vampire Red, and 30 other vivid hues, including three that glow under black light
application time: 15 minutes
lasts: One week to three months
comments: A semipermanent hair-color cream or gel for the Dennis Rodman set. The company's motto: Live fast and dye your hair. Rockers including Aerosmith's Steven Tyler swear by this stuff.