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Toxins in Your Tresses?

Hair analysis can identify everything from drug use to arsenic poisoning to vitamin deficiencies.

"You are what you eat" may be evident in your hair. Helen Cox, director [Options Center for Health & Education](#) in Peoria Heights, uses hair analysis with clients to determine possible mineral deficiencies in their bodies. Since vitamins and minerals work in concert, she then uses the mineral profile to infer possible vitamin deficiencies.

In addition to information about diet, Helen said hair analysis is useful to determine exposure to [toxins](#) in the environment. She can find evidence of second-hand smoke, for example.

"Environmental pollutants like arsenic, cadmium, and mercury can end up in soil and water.

Then when you eat vegetables grown in the soil or drink the water, it becomes a vicious cycle." she said.

Some solutions are as simple as drinking bottled water and not growing vegetables in contaminated soil. Other solutions can be vastly more complicated.

While [Options Center](#), 4316 N. Prospect Rd., uses and recommends the technique for diet and toxin analysis, other professionals are less embracing.

Dr. Richard Horndasch, on the faculty at the University of Illinois' College of Medicine in Peoria, said the limit of his personal knowledge of hair analysis is for detection of illegal drug use.

The Journal of the American Medical Association said the value of hair analysis for diet and toxins has not yet been established, and more research is needed.

Helen acknowledges the controversy, but said for \$104 for the initial testing and less for subsequent tests, the procedure done at [Options Center](#) offers valuable insights into diet and environmental exposures.

"Hair analysis is not widely accepted except in forensics and drug testing, but it can reveal things up to 20 years before a blood test diagnosis," she said.

Among her clients using hair analysis is one family in Tazewell County that showed "arsenic levels off the chart," she said.

"I suspect someone has dumped [arsenic](#) in the area. The soil must be high in arsenic and that can lead to contamination of well water. There was a child in the family showing horrible behavior problems. Hair analysis showed high arsenic levels."

Helen said she has concerns about putting children on medication for behavior problems when adjustment in diet could achieve good results without the possible toxic side effects.

"For both adults and children, many medications can be toxic to the liver," she said.

Another client in South Pekin has used hair analysis and tested so high in one toxin that further testing was recommended. Results showed toxicity levels so high that Helen told that client to limit showers to no more than three minutes.

Helen uses hair analysis to discuss family diet.

"I want families to eat at home with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and protein in the form of meat," she said. "I want them to then use leftovers for meals the next day's breakfast and lunch.

She advocates elimination of sugar, preservatives, coloring, junk food, caffeine, and soda from the diet.

While Helen sees hair analysis as a tool, her client, Carole Raschert, sees it as a life saver.

"I was a hairdresser for 31 years. I had arthritis and was in so much pain I was eating pain pills," said a radiant and pain-free Carole, 57. "I was on so much medication when I came to Helen. Now I'm just on thyroid medicine."

By her own admission, Carole did not live a healthy lifestyle. She didn't exercise and ate a poor diet. White bread and margarine were staples. She was sleeping 10 hours a night and was still fatigued.



Amanda Beadles snips a sample of hair from Carole Raschert for a routine hair analysis. Raschert consults with Helen Cox at Options Center for Health & Education about diet, supplements and exercise.

"I was so afraid of doing anything that might cause pain. I went grocery shopping but couldn't lift the bags from the car or I'd be in pain the next day," she said.

She consulted doctors and was told to see a psychologist for depression.

Desperate, she tried hair analysis at Options Center. The test confirmed all her bad habits.

"My emotions came from my lifestyle." Raschert said. "I was nutritionally deprived. After a lifetime of self-neglect, I began to take better care of myself. It was 2 ½ years ago I did hair analysis and started making changes. Now, I have more energy and less pain. My life is so happy now.

"Conventional Western medicine says medicate. But with hair analysis, I was able to make changes in my lifestyle and terminate medication. Hair analysis told us right down to specific details what changes to make."

Helen uses hair analysis to help prevent illness and chronic degenerative diseases. She started doing the procedure in 1995. Generally, she recommends clients come at least 6 weeks after perming or coloring their hair. Small clumps of hair, about 1/8 of an inch thick, are snipped from the back of the head.

Once people start hair analysis, they usually continue it periodically. People might be on a three month schedule, for awhile and then gradually lengthen the time between repeat analyses.

"You can't take pharmaceutical drugs without possible side effects," Helen said. "Then there's the interaction between drugs. I love hair analysis because it shows us ways to avoid drugs."