

# Surgical treatment a precise procedure

If you're one of the many who see hair loss or thinning every time you look in the mirror, you may feel powerless.

Most hair loss is caused by genetic factors, hormones or a medical condition. In some cases, the cause is unknown.

"Many of my patients are panicked young men," says Sydney surgeon Dr Russell Knudsen. "They're disillusioned and they feel like the medical option is a last resort."

In fact, he says, medical treatment for hair loss should be the first option.

"Hair loss is a medical condition.

Hairdressers can't diagnose the cause of hair loss, so it makes sense to consult a medical expert."

With 30 years in the field, Knudsen has seen treatments come and go, but his approach remains the same.

"My goal is to diminish future hair loss, and I have a doctor's responsibility to treat the problem as effectively as possible."

Treatment is a combination of medication and surgery, he says.

"Each performs a different function: medicine to slow down loss and stimulate growth, and surgery to replace hair. Think of hair loss as a leaking bucket. Surgery will top up the bucket, but medicine will block the leak."

Most over-the-counter treatments are designed to stimulate hair growth, but Knudsen says that without treating the underlying cause, stimulators alone won't be effective.

"A lot of people come in expecting miracles – a full head of hair in a month. It's impossible to get that kind of outcome."

A medical hair clinic can diagnose your condition and prescribe medication that can



Dr Russell Knudsen, pictured at left and above, uses a robot to perform some hair grafts. Photo: rachelh photography.com.au

block hormonal effects on hair follicles and stimulate regrowth, Knudsen says. It won't happen overnight, and success is measured in a different way.

"Hair loss treatment is a six-month commitment or it's a waste of money. It does not work in two or three months," he says. "If you're getting treatment and your hair loss isn't getting worse, that's positive. No change means successful treatment. If your hair loss does get worse, you stop the treatment."

If there's not enough hair to stimulate,

surgery is a next step. But Knudsen warns that it's essential to see a professional.

"People think that hair grafts are a simple cosmetic procedure and we see a lot of people who have had bad work done overseas," he says.

"You don't always get a proper doctor in the Third World. You get what you pay for."

Surgical treatment is such a precise procedure that Knudsen's Sydney clinic uses a robot to perform some hair grafts.

"The robots are accurate and never get

tired, which matters when the surgery has to be undetectable."

He says the future of hair loss treatment lies in stem cells.

"In theory, stem cells can be reinjected into the scalp to prompt a fuller regrowth, but we're not close to that yet."

In the meantime, if you're worried about hair loss, Knudsen's advice is to consult a medical professional.

"Treatment exists. You can stop the leak," he says.

## CONCERNED ABOUT HAIR LOSS?

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**WWW.KNUDSEN.COM.AU**

### SYDNEY

Level 2  
45a Bay Street  
Double Bay NSW 2028  
Phone 02 9327 0300

### MELBOURNE

Suite 203 Stanhill  
34 Queens Road  
Melbourne VIC 3004  
Phone 03 9867 6255

### BRISBANE

Suite 7  
50 Sherwood Street  
Toowong QLD 4066  
Phone 1800 685 399

### CANBERRA

13 Murray Crescent  
Manuka ACT 2603  
Phone 1800 685 399