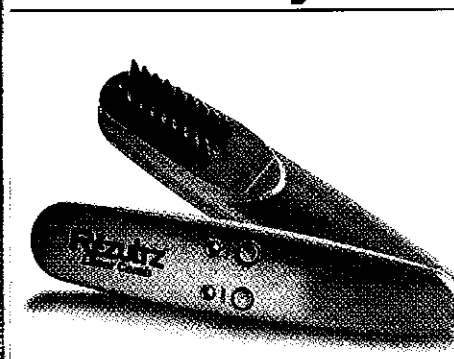


BY DIANA WEBSTER
**personal
story**



According to consumer studies, African-American women spend more on hair care than any other ethnic group. In my search for a return to healthy hair, I happened upon a press release which talked about the benefits of laser treatments to the scalp in strengthening hair and giving it an assist in regrowth. Laser machines, however, were big, bulky mechanical affairs which required that you go to a facility which housed the contraption where you could be treated. Oh, by the way, the treatments weren't cheap.

This press release I saw, however, announced the existence of a new kind of laser machine. It was small enough to be held in the hand like a brush, but was reputed to deliver the same big results as the office model machine. Best of all, it was actually affordable, especially when you did the math and calculated how much you'd be paying per laser treatment if you went the medical office route. Imagine my excitement! Here was a hair treatment option that seemed to hold real promise.

I got my first glimpse of the HairMax Laser Comb at a press party for the product. Publicists carried the combs in their hand, allowing us to look at it and hold it, and showed how to use it. The more people received demonstrations, the bigger the buzz. (PR 101: That's how you know you have a hit product on your hands.) Then and there, I decided to try that little blue laser comb a try.

Used by Dr. Matt L. Leavitt, a world-renowned and respected hair transplant surgeon, and the Founder and Medical Director of

Medical Hair Restoration (MHR, medicalhairrestoration.com), as part of his restoration treatments, the laser comb (which is offered by Dr. Leavitt through MHR, under his brand name the Rezultz Laser Comb) is defined as "a laser-based device that helps promote hair growth." The Rezultz/HairMax allows the user to undergo treatments in the comfort and privacy of his/her own home and is easy to use.

At home, although I couldn't wait to get started, I made an appointment for a hair consultation at a Medical Hair Restoration facility. While there, I spoke to Dr. Richard Halford, a hair transplant surgeon, who examined my hair and talked to me about my particular hair concerns. Although he pronounced me a good candidate for a hair transplant, Dr. Halford patiently explained the realities of the procedure and outlined what could and could not be expected from its outcome. As patient as Dr. Halford, I listened to everything he had to say. Before going to the consultation, however, I had already decided that I did not want to go that route. I wanted to see what the laser comb, and my already-in-progress hair care regimen, would do for me.

At the end of the consult, I thanked Dr. Halford and left clutching a black box with the laser comb inside.

At home, as promised, the unit was easy to use. I simply plugged the laser comb into an outlet and turned it on with the press of two buttons: one to turn the unit on (green light showing), the other to turn on the laser light (red light showing). Equipped with two large comb-like rows of teeth, the unit is placed on the top of the head and moved from the front to the back

of the head while firmly pressed on the scalp. The next pass of the laser comb is from one side of the head to the other. These passes are done until the entire head has been bathed in the laser light. The large rows of teeth are to part the hair so the laser light (several small circles of light which shows red) can reach the scalp.

A user's manual in the case provides detailed instructions as to the use of the laser comb, indicating that, for best results, it should be used on non-consecutive days at least three times weekly.

The laser comb has a timing mechanism, which is built into the unit and beeps at four-second intervals, which is the amount of time recommended for the laser light to bathe each area of your scalp being treated. At first, I expected a sensation of heat on my scalp, but there was none. As the manual suggested, my hair treatments lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

When I first began the hair treatments, I deliberately forced myself to be patient. Hair grows at a slow rate (just one-half inch per month), and the progress may seem even slower when you're anxious to realize regrowth. Now, several months later, I still try not to stare at my head, but I am definitely realizing the reappearance of hair on my head in those thinning areas where I had lost my hair.

Right now, I am very hopeful about the results that I am seeing. Still, I try not to live my life looking at my head in a mirror and then at a calendar.

What my consultation at Dr. Leavitt's facility showed me is that there are options for regrowing hair that women can explore. The thing to do is to become as educated

as possible about hair loss, what options there are, and which ones may be best for you. Beyond that, becoming educated about caring for our hair and our health, avoiding unsafe hairstyling routines, the structure and makeup of hair, how it grows, and the effect of genetics and physical and medical conditions on hair is crucial to understand the life cycle of these precious strands on our head.

To that end, Dr. Leavitt's stellar book, *Women And Hair Loss: A Physician's Perspective*, is a comprehensive source book which is one of the best I've ever found on the subject. For African-American women, in particular, there are many hair care practices which contribute to hair loss or the seeming inability of Black hair to achieve maximum growth. When looked at from this perspective, the feelings of frustration, embarrassment, and humiliation many of us experience because of our hair issues tend to disappear.

For me, being armed with knowledge was a real help in understanding the problem of hair loss and the lack of hair growth I had experienced. It was also a lesson learned in what *not* to do to my hair—whether worn natural, relaxed, pressed, dyed, with or without enhancements or accessories.

Better yet, I came to appreciate that we are so much more than what people see on the top of our heads. ■

At an age where I am long past caring what other people think of me, based on the way I wear my hair, today, my main concern is simple—having a healthy head of hair, period.

HAIR I AM

