CHAPTER 1

# How Hair Really Grows

Before you can grow more hair, it helps to understand what your hair is already doing. Every strand on your head is on its own schedule, and knowing that schedule makes the rest of this guide make sense.

## The life of a single hair

Each hair grows from a tiny structure under the skin called a **follicle**. You have roughly 100,000 follicles on your scalp, and each one cycles through three main phases over and over for your whole life.

• **Growth phase (anagen).** The hair is actively growing. This phase lasts anywhere from two to seven years, and it is the main reason some people can grow long hair and others cannot. About 85 to 90 percent of your scalp hairs are in this phase at any time.

• **Transition phase (catagen).** Growth stops and the follicle shrinks. This lasts only a couple of weeks.

• **Resting phase (telogen).** The hair sits in place for about three months while a new hair

starts forming beneath it. Eventually the old hair sheds and the cycle starts again.

On average, scalp hair grows about one centimetre (a little under half an inch) per month. That works out to roughly 12 to 15 centimetres, or five to six inches, a year. That number is the same whether you use expensive products or none at all. What you can change is how healthy your follicles are, how many are active, and how much hair you lose to breakage.

Key idea

Hair growth is slow. Any honest plan for fuller hair is measured in months, not days. If someone promises overnight results, be careful.

## Is it normal to shed hair every day?

Yes. Losing around 50 to 100 hairs a day is normal, because at any moment a small share of your follicles are at the end of their rest phase. You will see hair in the shower drain, on your brush, and on your pillow. This alone is not a sign of a problem.

Shedding becomes a concern when it is clearly more than your usual, when it goes on for weeks, or when you can see your scalp more than you used to. We will cover how to tell the difference in Chapter 3.