



Natural hairline density in men: findings of a pilot survey

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The hairline area is a critical component to re-create cosmetic results and naturalness in hair restoration surgery because this area receives the most direct visual scrutiny. Location and shape are important aspects, and so is the graft type and hair density. Patients are often lured by the offer of “maximum follicular unit density” on the Internet, with the implicit assumption that hairlines of greater follicular unit density have optimal cosmetic value. It has already been established that different areas of the scalp have naturally occurring, different follicular unit densities, with the mastoid and mid-occipital areas revealing the greatest density, and areas of the crown and supra-auricular region noted to have fewer follicular units and less hair.¹ However, it is notable that there has never been a scientific evaluation of hairline density to determine what should be re-created. In the absence of scientific validation, any assertion is difficult to refute since people are often under the impression that when it comes to hair on the head, “more is better.” Years of experience have taught us that more hair or more grafts, without consideration of factors such as optimal distribution and natural groupings, is not, in and of itself, a cosmetic advantage. Therefore, the rationale for a population survey of natural hairline density is threefold:

1. Observation reveals that hairline areas (temple regions) in patients undergoing hair restoration surgery often appear to have fewer follicular units per square centimeter compared to the donor area or naturally occurring areas adjacent to the recipient zone. The question then arises: Is this true for people without androgenetic alopecia? If so, then naturalness would dictate less follicular unit density in the hairline area compared to donor and other areas (which is consistent with the concept of a transition zone of hair, and not a wall).
2. In order to re-create natural appearing hairline density, it is necessary to know what constitutes natural density, or the numbers of hairs and/or follicular units per square centimeter at the hairline. Hairline refers not only to the frontal hairline but also the temporal area and temporal points.
3. It also follows that grafting higher density than what occurs naturally is unnatural, unnecessary, and not a judicious use of limited donor hair resources.

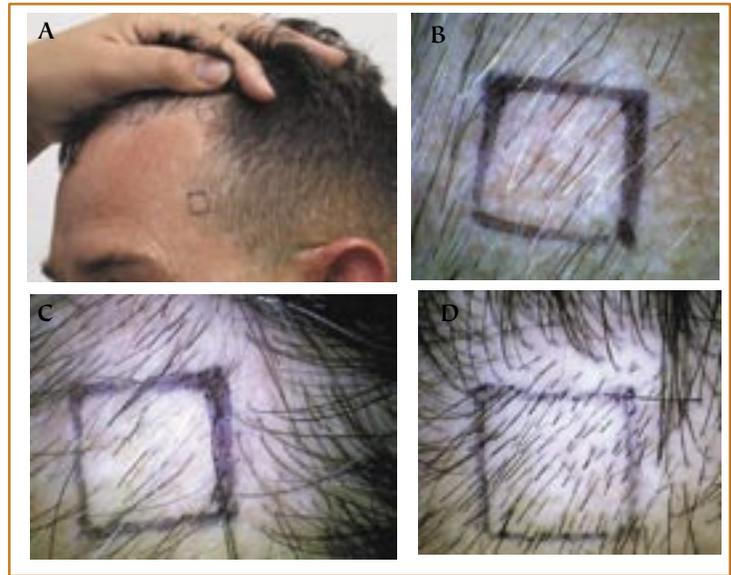


Figure 1. Illustration of surveyed areas: A: lateral global photograph of 1 cm² boxed areas; B: temporal point; C: temporal apex; D: frontal hairline

Based on these contentions, a hairline density survey was initiated as a preliminary effort to assist hair restoration surgeons to achieve natural appearing density, while avoiding the waste of finite and sometimes scarce resources.

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