

Futilis Fashionitis



Step 1: Work to achieve a more confident and controlled hairstyle (inquire about local tests for Hypertrichosis Languginosa).

The start of a new year finds me indulged in chronic list making with the end goal of complete personal transformation. It is also the season I begin interviewing illnesses to inform my hypochondriasis. When I am committed to a new trend and convinced it will be the style choice with which I present myself to loved ones during an open casket ceremony, I call up four friends to discuss my latest look and impending death.

New acquaintances and family members are safe as I don't want to alienate recent associates or frighten my parents. However, a quadrangle of poor souls have been carefully groomed for years and I know each will commit an hour to critiquing superficial style selections while offering alternating points of view concerning my latest fatal disease.

A typical conversation starts with a fashion query and accompanying ailment:

ME: So I'm thinking about styling a sort of sixties updo with heavy bangs and little curls on the side. Also, I don't want to freak you out, but I might have a rare condition known as Human Werewolf Syndrome...

TRACI (punk-rock Chickasaw chick with a PhD who keeps up her beauty license): The first thing you need to do is dump some dye on your head and deal with your damned grey roots. (*Voice changes in a way that might accompany eye-rolling*) You always get "sick" around this time of year.

STELLA (video artists, Patron Saint of Postcards, and fellow hypochondriac): You should top off the look with a crown of jeweled birds and make the side curls HUGE in the style of Orthodox Jews. As far as your headstone, do you want a talking feature or video screen? I'm thinking we could hook up a recorder playing Rod McKuen records with a photomontage accompanied by the song "Listen to the Warm." Oh my God, in the time we've been talking I sprouted a monobrow. I probably have Human Werewolf Syndrome too.

JANE (grad student of science of medicine versed in the Latin names of most maladies): That sounds gorgeous! You'll look like some amalgamation of a mountainous folk peasant and Russian princess. Anastasia of the Alps! As for your Congenital Hypertrichosis Lanuginosa, there have only been 50 documented cases since medieval times. If it makes you feel better, Fedor Jeftichew, commonly known as Jo-Jo the Dog Faced Boy, was a very successful turn-of-the-century sideshow performer.

BECKI (biologist/herbalist/realist who is also a medical/psychological intuitive): Do you think you'll have time to achieve this look every morning? It might be a pretty option for going out. As far as the HWS, were you covered in lanugo, or a fine layer of hair, as a fetus? No? Good. Are you suffering metabolic disorders associated with prescription drugs? No? Excellent. (*Her tactic is a pampering form of reason through logical questions that allows me to gradually come to terms with the fact that my hair will look nice and I am most likely not dying.*) The genetic abnormality you describe is typified by symptoms such as an entire face obscured by a thick mat of hair. Can you currently see most of your features?

This year, I offer you a list of ten snappy style suggestions accessorized with exotic ailments.

Step 1: Vintage scarves are available for pocket change at most thrift stores. When tied from head to chin and paired with sunglasses, the wearer looks like a 1950s movie star steering a convertible through the side streets of Monte Carlo. It is also a beehive-preserving style popularized by sexy wisecracking waitress Flo and revived by sultry crack-smoking songstress Amy Winehouse. A gaily patterned scarf can help to obscure Cornu Cutaneum, an excess keratin tumor that manifests itself as head horns.

Step 2: Today's weightless foundation garment is not your mother's girdle. Slimming body stockings create a smooth silhouette and cooling lycra-based fabric does not irritate the feverish rash of Monkeypox.

Step 3: Side-swept bangs create a sense of movement which is great when Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis/Parkinsonism-Dementia leave you a motionless shell. ALS-PDS is a brain disease rendering one completely inactive (spouses, coworkers, and family may have already pointed out that you are suffering from the early stages).

Step 4: A quilted poncho becomes an instant comforter when, despite your assurance to CDC investigators that you have never been in contact with nocturnal winged creatures of Southern China, you come down with bat SARS.

Step 5: Catsuits cover the body from wrist to ankle, but still offer figure-flattering allure. Accessorized with boots and a low-slung belt, this look requires Bond-girl guts. Diana Rigg wore her skin-tight one-piece wonder in the opening credits of *The Avengers* with elegance and grace. A Gortex model is a stylish alternative to bulky snowsuits during wild Wisconsin winters. Also, when your body erupts with the bubbling fluid-filled papules of Granuloma Annulare, you'll still look hot...blisteringly hot.

Step 6: Tuck a peacock plume in your hatband because this year flirty feathers are everywhere in homage to Avian Flu!

Step 7: The old rules of pairing a smoky eye with subtle gloss or bright mouth with minimal maquillage are over. Brilliant blue shadow and bold red lips are a daring way to mask the complete lack of expression resulting from the facial paralysis of Moebius syndrome.

Step 8: Couples dressing can be corny, but coordinating a dress with a tie creates a unified look for special occasions. This is most helpful when one of the pair is stricken with Capgras, a neurological disorder that creates the fear a loved one is being impersonated by a doppelganger.

Step 9: This season's hot hue is a dark plum color consistent with the mottled necrotized flesh of Calciphylaxis. Wedge rotting tootsies into in a pair of purple pumps and strut your stuff until your foot falls off!

Step 10: The classic knit is back. Forgo synthetic fibers for handcrafted wool wearables. These pullovers tend to be slightly scratchy, but those of you familiar with the feeling of bugs crawling under your skin will hardly notice. Morgellons disease is prefaced by the sensation of being infested with insects. When lesions burst to produce thread-like filaments, they will neatly tangle in the fluff of your cuddly sweater. Think of the hairs emerging from oozing open sores as your own natural angora!

My real New Year's resolution is to stop torturing friends with infectious disease paranoia and let my hair down (unless I loose all my hair from a combination of Propecia, Tricotilomania, and drug-resistant Pneumonoultramicroscopicosilicovolcanoconiosis).

TRIED: Beyond Toothpaste, in its elegant golden tube, is a natural solution to bleeding gums and filmy morning teeth. Right now there are untold colonies of bacteria wildly reproducing in your mouth. Please attend to this problem as soon as possible.

TRUE: Antique handkerchiefs are always classy. When a man pulls a monogrammed square from his suit pocket or a lady weeps behind a scrap of lace it is mysterious. Contrast this with tissue snufflers who merely look contagious.

TIRED: Ironic facial hair is tired. I don't mind your moustache unless it is a postmodern commentary on the absurdity of moustaches. In that case, I will use it as a target to aim my punch.

TRENDY: Critical thinking burns three times more calories than dogmatic submission.