

A FIELD GUIDE FROM DR. LEILA DOOLITTLE

Hair Growth Oils and Face Serums

Six DIY recipes, the science of the follicle and the skin barrier, and the root causes that sit beneath them both.

WELCOME

The oil is the last step, not the first.



Some of my favorite rituals happen outside the clinic: a dropper of oil on a cold Ozark bluff, a few minutes of scalp massage before bed, a serum pressed into skin that has spent the day in wind and sun.

The rituals are simple. The biology beneath them is not. Your hair follicle is a miniature organ with its own blood supply, stem cells, and immune protection. Your skin barrier is a precisely ordered wall of lipids and proteins that decides what stays in and what gets out.

In this guide you will find six recipes I use and recommend, the evidence behind each ingredient, and an honest note wherever that evidence is still thin. You will also find the questions I ask when hair thins or skin flares, because what you put on the surface works best when the inside is supported too.

With warmth,
Dr. Leila Doolittle



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CHAPTER ONE

The Follicle Is Fed From Within

Every hair begins as a decision your physiology makes about where to send its resources.



HOW HAIR GROWS

A miniature organ on its own schedule

Each hair grows from a follicle anchored deep in the skin. At its base sits the dermal papilla, a cluster of signaling cells wrapped in tiny blood vessels. It tells the surrounding stem cells when to divide and how long to keep going.

- **Anagen,** the growth phase, lasts two to seven years on the scalp.
- **Catagen,** a short transition of a few weeks.
- **Telogen,** a resting phase of about three months, after which the hair sheds and a new one begins.

At any moment, roughly 85 to 90 percent of your scalp follicles are growing, and losing 50 to 100 hairs a day is normal. When many follicles are pushed into rest at once, shedding surges two to three months after the trigger. This pattern, telogen effluvium, often follows illness, surgery, childbirth, crash dieting, or intense stress.



MY CLINICAL LENS

Why follicles get rationed

Hair is one of the most metabolically demanding tissues you have, and it is not essential for survival. When resources run short, your physiology quietly sends them elsewhere. These are the places I look first:

- **Iron.** Low ferritin is common in women with diffuse shedding, even when hemoglobin looks normal.
- **Thyroid.** Follicles depend on thyroid hormone, so I look at free T3, reverse T3, and thyroid antibodies, not TSH alone.
- **Insulin and androgens.** Insulin resistance raises androgen output, and DHT shrinks genetically sensitive follicles, a pattern common in PCOS.
- **Protein, zinc, and vitamin D,** the building blocks and signals of the growth phase.
- **Cortisol, sleep, and toxic burden,** including biotoxins and gut driven inflammation.



CHAPTER TWO

Hair Growth Oils

Carrier oils condition the scalp and the shaft. A few essential oils carry real signals for the follicle.



THE BASE OF EVERY BLEND

Carrier oils for the scalp

OIL	WHAT IT OFFERS
Jojoba	A liquid wax ester that closely resembles your own sebum. Light, slow to go rancid, and easy to wash out.
Argan	Oleic and linoleic acids plus vitamin E. Softens the shaft and calms a dry scalp.
Coconut	Lauric acid is small enough to enter the hair shaft, and it reduced protein loss from hair in lab testing. Solid below about 76°F.
Pumpkin seed	Rich in phytosterols. Taken by mouth, it raised hair counts in men in a 24 week controlled trial; topical evidence is still early.
Castor	Very thick, rich in ricinoleic acid. It coats the shaft and reduces breakage, but no human trial shows regrowth.



SIGNALS FOR THE FOLLICLE

Essential oils with evidence

Rosemary HUMAN TRIAL

In a six month randomized trial in pattern hair loss, rosemary oil performed comparably to 2 percent minoxidil, with less scalp itching.

Peppermint ANIMAL STUDY

Diluted peppermint oil increased follicle number and depth in mice, likely by dilating the small vessels that feed the follicle.

Lavender ANIMAL STUDY

Lavender oil increased follicle numbers in mice. It also brings a calming scent to an evening ritual.

Tea tree HUMAN TRIAL

A 5 percent tea tree shampoo improved dandruff in a controlled trial. A cleaner, calmer scalp is a better home for growth.



HAIR RECIPE ONE

Rosemary Mint Scalp Oil

- 2 tablespoons (30 mL) jojoba or argan oil
- 6 drops rosemary essential oil
- 3 drops peppermint essential oil

Make it

Add the essential oils to a 30 mL amber dropper bottle, top with the carrier oil, cap, and roll gently between your palms. This is about a 1.5 percent dilution.

Use it

Two to three times a week, apply one dropper along each part, then massage for four minutes. Leave it on for one hour or overnight, and shampoo twice to wash it out.

Note: peppermint tingles. Skip this blend on broken, sunburned, or inflamed skin.



HAIR RECIPE TWO

Strengthening Pre-Wash Oil

- 1 tbsp pumpkin seed oil
- 1 tbsp coconut oil, melted
- 1 tsp castor oil
- 4 drops lavender essential oil

Massage into the scalp and work through the lengths and ends 30 to 60 minutes before you wash. Best for dry, brittle, or breaking hair.

HAIR RECIPE THREE

Calm Scalp Oil

- 2 tbsp jojoba oil
- 1 tsp argan oil
- 1 tsp pumpkin seed oil

Fragrance free. A gentle option if you are pregnant or nursing, have a sensitive scalp, or simply prefer to skip essential oils.



THE RITUAL

The four minute scalp massage

In a small study, four minutes of daily scalp massage for 24 weeks increased hair thickness. Gentle stretch appears to change which genes the dermal papilla cells switch on, and massage also draws blood flow to the scalp.

- Part your hair into sections and apply oil along each part.
- Use the pads of your fingers, never your nails.
- Press and move the scalp itself in small circles, rather than sliding over it.
- Travel from the hairline to the crown, then behind the ears and down to the nape.
- Breathe slowly. A longer exhale shifts your nervous system toward rest, which is a gift to every follicle.



CHAPTER THREE

Face Serums

Your skin already makes its own oil. The best serums speak the same language.



BARRIER BIOLOGY

Bricks, mortar, and sebum

The outer layer of your skin, the stratum corneum, is built like a wall. Flattened cells are the bricks. The mortar between them is a precise blend of lipids: roughly half ceramides, a quarter cholesterol, and the rest free fatty acids.

Sebum, the oil your glands make, adds another layer. It is mostly triglycerides and fatty acids, about a quarter wax esters, and about 12 percent squalene.

When the mortar thins, water escapes through the gaps. Dermatologists measure this as transepidermal water loss, and it is why a stripped barrier feels tight, stings, and flares. A slightly acidic surface, around pH 5, keeps the enzymes that build ceramides working.



MATCHING OIL TO SKIN

Linoleic, oleic, and sebum-like oils

TYPE	OILS	BEST FOR
High linoleic lighter, quick to absorb	Safflower (high linoleic type), grapeseed, rosehip seed, hemp seed	Oily, congested, and acne prone skin
High oleic richer, more occlusive	Olive, avocado, marula, sweet almond	Dry and mature skin, and the body
Balanced	Argan, sea buckthorn	Most skin types
Sebum-like	Jojoba, squalane	Every skin type, including sensitive

The sebum of acne prone skin tends to run low in linoleic acid. In a small trial, topical linoleic acid reduced microcomedones, the earliest acne lesion, by about a quarter in one month.



FACE SERUM ONE

Barrier Repair Serum

- 15 mL rosehip seed oil
- 10 mL jojoba oil
- 5 mL squalane
- 1 drop frankincense (optional)

Rosehip supplies linoleic acid for ceramide building, jojoba mirrors your wax esters, and squalane restores a stable sebum lipid. Best for dry, tight, or reactive skin.

FACE SERUM TWO

Clear Skin Serum

- 20 mL high linoleic safflower or grapeseed oil
- 10 mL jojoba oil
- 2 drops tea tree essential oil

Tea tree gel reduced acne lesions in controlled trials. On the face, this gentle dose is enough. Best for oily or breakout prone skin.



FACE SERUM THREE

Golden Glow Serum

- 20 mL argan oil
- 8 mL rosehip seed oil
- 2 mL sea buckthorn oil
- 3 drops vitamin E (tocopherol)

Sea buckthorn is one of the richest plant sources of palmitoleic acid, an omega 7 fat, plus carotenoids that give it a sunset color. Keep it to a small share or it will tint your skin. Vitamin E slows lipid peroxidation, the rancidity that turns a soothing oil into an irritant.

How to apply any serum

Oils hold no water, so they cannot hydrate on their own. Mist or splash your face with water first, then press three to four drops into damp skin. The oil seals the water in. Use at night, or in the morning under sunscreen.



CHAPTER FOUR

Safety, Storage, and the Inside Story

Concentrated plants deserve respect. A few simple rules keep every blend gentle and fresh.



SAFETY FIRST

Dilution and care

AREA	STRENGTH	DROPS PER 10 ML CARRIER
Face	0.5 to 1 percent	1 to 2 drops
Scalp	1 to 2 percent	2 to 4 drops
Body	2 percent	4 drops

- Patch test on your inner arm for 48 hours before the first full use.
- Cold pressed citrus oils, such as bergamot, lime, and lemon, can burn skin in sunlight.
- Pregnant, nursing, or blending for a child? Ask first, and keep peppermint and eucalyptus away from young faces.
- Never apply essential oils undiluted, and never take them by mouth.
- If a blend irritates, wipe it off with plain carrier oil, then wash.



KEEPING OILS FRESH

Storage and freshness

Plant oils rich in linoleic and linolenic acids, such as rosehip and hemp, oxidize quickly. Oxidized oils form lipid peroxides that irritate skin, so freshness is part of the formula.

- Store blends in dark amber or cobalt glass, away from heat and direct light.
- Keep rosehip, hemp, and sea buckthorn in the refrigerator.
- Make small batches and use them within three months.
- Add a few drops of vitamin E to slow oxidation.
- Trust your nose. A smell like crayons, putty, or old paint means the oil has turned.



FROM THE INSIDE

Skin and hair begin upstream

- **The gut skin axis.** Intestinal permeability and microbial imbalance can drive inflammation that surfaces in the skin.
- **Blood sugar.** Excess glucose binds to collagen and forms advanced glycation end products, which stiffen and age the skin.
- **Essential fats.** The omega 3 index shows how much EPA and DHA are built into your cell membranes, including those of your skin.
- **Sleep.** Skin repair and cell turnover peak overnight, guided by your circadian clocks.
- **Toxic burden.** Mold, biotoxins, and heavy metals add to an inflammatory load your skin and follicles feel first.

Some of these links are well established; others are clinical patterns I explore with each patient. Either way, your hair and skin are messengers worth hearing.



QUICK REFERENCE

Your oil ritual checklist

- [ ] Choose a carrier that suits your scalp or skin type.
- [ ] Measure essential oils by the dilution chart, never by guesswork.
- [ ] Patch test every new blend for 48 hours.
- [ ] Massage the scalp for four minutes, two to three times a week.
- [ ] Press face serums into damp skin.
- [ ] Store in dark glass, refrigerate delicate oils, and use within three months.
- [ ] Give any scalp routine at least three months before you judge it.
- [ ] If shedding surges or skin keeps flaring, look upstream: ferritin, thyroid, insulin, hormones, gut, sleep, and toxic burden.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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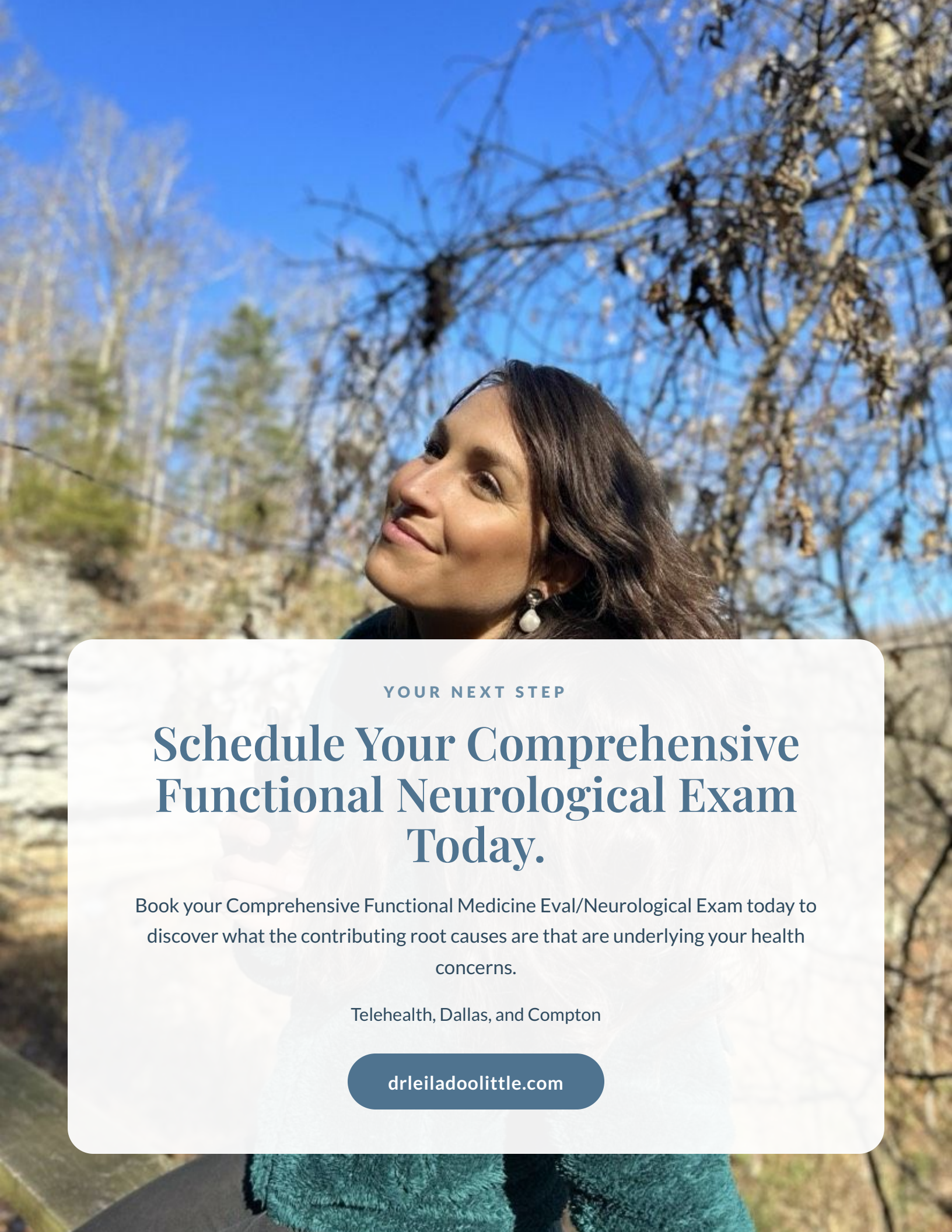


Dr. Leila Doolittle is a Doctor of Chiropractic practicing Functional Medicine and Functional Neurology. She is the founder and lead clinician of Resonance Wellness and the host of The Resonant Life Podcast.

Her work brings together extended laboratory testing, comprehensive functional neurological exams, NeuroQuant brain imaging, and a deep respect for the body as one connected system. She looks for the contributing root causes beneath symptoms, from the gut and the endocrine system to the nervous system and environmental exposures.

Raised on an Ozark farm, she now spends much of her time on the land she loves, where she is building Resonant Ranch, a place where the land itself is part of the medicine.

This guide is for education. It is not a substitute for individual care. Please consult your own clinician before starting a new routine, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or managing a health condition.



YOUR NEXT STEP

Schedule Your Comprehensive Functional Neurological Exam Today.

Book your Comprehensive Functional Medicine Eval/Neurological Exam today to discover what the contributing root causes are that are underlying your health concerns.

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