

SHAMPOOS AND CONDITIONERS

Shampoos

The purpose of a shampoo is threefold:

1. to cleanse the hair and scalp;
2. to improve appearance of the hair; and
3. to improve and facilitate management of the hair.

Unfortunately, shampoos are good cleansing agents but not particularly good at maintaining optimum hair appearance or facilitating hair management. This is where the need for a conditioner arises (see page 7).

Different shampoos contain different surfactants (cleansing agents); often more than one. These vary in their effectiveness as cleansing agents, but even more so in the condition in which they leave the hair. Sometimes shampoos are too effective and remove all the sebum or natural oil. Conditioners are then used to replace this lost oil to a certain degree with various artificial substitutes which remain on the hair.

Not all shampoos are the same

Shampoos are made for normal hair, fine hair, dry hair, greasy hair, damaged hair, sunny climates, swimmers, and even medicated for such conditions as dandruff. Others may be made for the exacting needs of Afro-Caribbean hair (see page 9). It is most essential that you select a shampoo for the right hair type – normal, dry, greasy or damaged (over processed). If in doubt, your hairdresser will tell you which class you belong to. (There is just a possibility that some hairdressers will be slightly biased when it comes to admitting that hair is over-processed!)

Market research has shown that opinion on shampoos is very subjective. A shampoo which one person regards highly will be instantly rejected by someone else. Often, the shape of the bottle, the perfume, or even the colour are the deciding factors, and manufacturers know this. From the consumer's point of view, this really is not very sensible. You should choose your shampoo carefully and reject it if it does not suit completely. Do a little experimentation and then stick to the one that suits you best. There is no need to keep changing your shampoo once a satisfactory product has been found.

You are advised to seek your hair care products, such as shampoos, from the large and well-known companies. You are then buying cosmetic and scientific knowledge together with reliability. These big companies have a great deal to lose if their products do not live up to their claims.

Lather is an issue not well understood. People like lather, and shampoos often contain substances to stabilise the lather. Lather is not essential to effective cleansing.

What do shampoos contain?

Shampoos are fairly straightforward products, although some appear to have many more ingredients than others. Generally, a long list of ingredients merely suggests duplication of ingredients (for example, three preservatives instead of one). The major ingredient is always water.

Shampoos will nearly always contain two surfactants for cleansing purposes, and possibly a separate lather stabiliser. There will usually be one or more humectant, the function of which is to attract moisture and impart this to the hair. There will be

a number of substances the principal function of which is to coat each hair, making it smooth and shiny whilst also keeping the moisture in. These vary from simple oily or waxy substances to complex chemicals which attach themselves to the hair electrostatically. In recent years, silicone compounds such as dimethicone have become very important for this purpose. And finally there will be perfume and preservatives. It is not unusual for a shampoo to contain several preservatives.

Are shampoos safe?

Shampoos are amongst the safest of all cosmetic products, partly because they are diluted, and partly because of their short contact time. Their ingredients are generally remarkably safe and unlikely to cause allergy or sensitisation.

If a given shampoo does cause allergic problems, it will almost certainly be due to the preservative(s) or perfumes it contains. If this is the case, then you are just as likely to be allergic to many other shampoos on the market, and you must seek expert advice – preferably from a registered trichologist.

Shampoos can cause eye irritation, and all such products should be kept out of the eyes. Lack of obvious irritation does not mean that no actual eye damage is occurring, but few shampoos are entirely safe if they get into the eyes. Very occasionally, problems such as matting of the hair can arise because of interaction between your shampoo and other hair care products, or even other shampoos. Such reactions are extremely rare.

You are advised to try to obtain all the hair care products you require from one manufacturer's range. When some strange and often distressing reaction involving hair damage occurs due to simple cosmetics, it nearly always involves the use of products from more than one manufacturer, each quite safe if used on its own or within the manufacturer's own range.

How often should you shampoo your hair?

How often you should shampoo your hair is a matter of debate. How often you wash your hair is a purely personal decision. If you are in very dirty employment, or you perspire profusely from physical activity, you will obviously wish to wash your hair frequently. Hair cannot be washed too often (it is up to you), and shampoos certainly do not cause hair loss. You will often notice lost hairs when shampooing, but these are simply natural losses which would occur anyway.

Medicated shampoos

Shampoos are occasionally employed as a vehicle for medication, although this is generally limited to anti-dandruff or anti-psoriasis medications. Generally, the aim is not to cure but to control the condition. Most medications applied in this way, including antiseptics, take time to act. You are strongly advised to leave medicated shampoos on your scalp for at least 15 minutes before rinsing off. (This refers, of course, to the diluted shampoo after it has been worked up into a lather.)

When micro-organisms on the scalp are reduced by medication, the numbers are generally restored within a matter of days. When using a medicated shampoo such as an anti-dandruff preparation, you will obtain a far better response if you use it initially every night for five to seven nights, and then revert to a normal frequency of use (unless you are instructed otherwise by your doctor, trichologist or pharmacist). Generally, this intensive approach is perfectly safe for products bought off the shelf, but should not be adopted without specific advice if the product is sold to you by a

pharmacist or prescribed by a doctor. (Such medication may contain stronger or more dangerous ingredients.) Do not adopt this intensive approach (shampooing for several nights in succession) if your shampoo contains coal tar or salicylates, or is recommended for psoriasis.

Shampooing technique

Using your shampoo

- Let your hair hang naturally when shampooing. Do not pile it up on top of your head. Rinse your hair thoroughly with warm water in preparation for shampooing.
- When shampooing, use only the minimum amount of water. This is particularly important when using medicated shampoos. You are likely in any event to dilute the shampoo (and its ingredients) some 15–30 times. Getting this right is largely a matter of practice.
- There is no need to apply shampoo twice as some people do. Modern shampoos are formulated to keep the removed dirt in suspension, and rinsing will then remove all dirt.
- The most important aspect of shampooing is to ensure adequate and thorough rinsing. Always rinse your hair under running water and rub it as little as possible at this stage. (Lather performs an unintentional but useful function in helping to ensure adequate rinsing, as lather is difficult to remove completely and takes much rinsing out.)
- Always keep shampoos out of the eyes. The danger is not simply one of irritation (stinging). Certain shampoo ingredients can actually harm the eye. Because a shampoo does not sting does not necessarily mean it will not damage the eye.

Professional opinion used to recommend two applications of shampoo. This is perfectly safe but, as stated above, it is not usually necessary with modern day shampoos. Only if the hair is very dirty indeed, or loaded with hairdressing products such as setting gels or oily pomades, should double shampooing ever be necessary. If your hair is heavily coated with hairdressing products and a film has built up, special stripping shampoos with greater cleansing power are available. These should not be used too frequently.

Drying your hair

- Using a clean dry towel, carefully pat your hair dry.
- Whilst the hair is still damp, carefully untangle the hair with a wide-toothed comb.
- If possible, allow further drying to occur naturally.
- Only use a dryer on damp, towel-dried hair, and use the lowest setting.
- Always switch off the dryer before your hair is completely dry.
- If blow drying, keep the dryer moving continuously and do not concentrate the heat in one spot.

CONDITIONERS

Why a conditioner?

A conditioner makes the hair shinier, smoother to the touch, more easily combable, minimises fly-away hair, and helps to maintain the moisture content. Modern products also dissipate static electricity and may protect the hair from the harmful effects of excessive sunlight. (The addition of UV – ultra violet – screens is currently very fashionable.)

At a more professional level, conditioners may be used before hair processing, and possibly after, to minimise the slight damage which all hair processing produces to a certain degree.

Many people do not appreciate that even combing and brushing can be damaging to normal hair, and even more so if hair shaft defects or excessive fragility are present. The longer the hair is the more vulnerable it is and the longer it will be exposed to these procedures. Conditioners leave the hair smoother and reduce the friction occurring during combing. By preventing matting and knotting of the hair they make combing and brushing an altogether easier and safer procedure.

Long hair takes more force to comb and longer to comb. Because of the time it remains on the head, any damage caused is cumulative and is worse towards the end of the hair. Long hair should always be conditioned.

What a conditioner will do for you

In addition to detangling hair (rendering it more manageable), a conditioner will give hair a sleeker, healthier appearance. The conditioner coats the hair shaft, causing the cuticles to lie flat, enabling it to reflect light. The hair appears shinier. The conditioner also serves as a protectant to the cuticles and hair shafts, while sealing in moisture. Many will attract moisture from the air. Conditioners reduce combing friction and the force required when combing.

TWO-IN-ONE PRODUCTS

Two-in-one products (a shampoo containing conditioning agents) are an attempt to address today's busy lifestyle and the increased frequency of shampooing. At best, two-in-one products represent a compromise dictated by the market demand. There is absolutely no doubt that better conditioning is usually achieved by the application of a separate conditioner or cream rinse.

However, this does not imply that a good two-in-one product is unable to provide a satisfactory level of conditioning for many people. Modern ingredients such as silicones have enabled satisfactory two-in-one products to be formulated. The choice is dictated by your needs and the expert advice you receive. Price should not be a consideration.

In most instances, the common belief that two-in-one products cause a build up of deposits on the hair is false. The principal conditioning agent in most products cannot be deposited in a film more than one molecule thick! Silicones, which are often blamed for causing such deposits, are for the most part thin, oily liquids and quite incapable of causing such a problem.

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO HAIR TYPE

Before you can select an appropriate shampoo you really do need to know your hair type. This is not always as simple as it sounds, but the following points provide a rough guide.

Your hair is normal if it is neither greasy nor dry, has not been permed or colour-treated, holds its style well, and looks healthy.

Your hair is fine/greasy if it feels limp, lacks volume, is difficult to manage, does not hold its style, and soon gets greasy again after shampooing.

Your hair is dry if it looks dull, feels rough, tangles easily, has been treated chemically (permed, bleached or coloured), is liable to split ends, and is dry and frizzy.

SPLIT ENDS

Split ends are simply the separation of individual hair cell layers. They result from consistent abuse to the hair. Trimming split ends might be a temporary solution (and the only solution once they exist), but prevention is better than cure, so behaviour modification is a more permanent solution. The only way to prevent split ends altogether is to use preventative conditioning and to avoid all chemical treatments. Split ends, if they do occur, can never be repaired, and the only real remedy is scissors! There are products which may be applied to the hair tips but their action is purely cosmetic; they draw the splayed fibres together, making the ends look less ragged. No actual mechanical repair occurs. Splaying of this type largely occurs at the ends of the hair because this is the oldest part of the hair shaft and has been exposed to 'weathering' and traumatic damage longer than any other part of the hair.

AFRO-CARIBBEAN HAIR

Afro-Caribbean hair is different from Caucasian/European hair and has its own requirements, one of which is that conditioning is of much greater importance. The texture of Afro-Caribbean hair when in bad condition tends to be very harsh. Continual processing, including hot combing, tends to make the hair more porous. It is not uncommon to find that hair conditioned before and after processing takes up more conditioner after processing. This is due partly to the hair becoming more electro-negative during processing.

Afro-Caribbean hair tends to be less oily than other types because the tightness of the curl prevents the natural sebum coating the full length of the hair shaft. This in turn leads to a build up of static electricity which causes 'flyaway' hair. Clean hair can fluff out from the head and is difficult to comb.

General points on shampooing Afro-Caribbean hair

- Because Afro-Caribbean hair is porous, it may be necessary to use a little more shampoo than expected.
- Do not use too much shampoo because the lather is extremely difficult to rinse out of Afro-Caribbean hair.
- Do not rub too hard; Afro-Caribbean hair is particularly prone to tangling.
- Afro-Caribbean hair generally benefits from a pH balanced shampoo – that is, with a pH value in the range 4.5 – 5.5. Not as many shampoos are pH balanced today as was once the case. (Values below 7.0 are acidic).
- After relaxing procedures, always use the shampoo recommended by the manufacturer of the relaxer. This is one instance where it may be necessary to shampoo a number of times (refer to the relaxer instructions).
- After relaxing, the hair is very delicate and could break. Try to wash out the relaxer without massaging the hair.
- Hair is shampooed prior to having a curly perm because the lotion then e cuticle better when the hair is clean. Vigorous rubbing should be avoided since this stimulates the scalp, making it more sensitive to the chemicals used.
- When using a hairdryer or blow dryer, use a low temperature setting. Blow dryers should be held at least six inches from your head, rotating the dryer around your head frequently.

General points on conditioning Afro-Caribbean hair

- The heat appliances and chemical processes often used by black people deplete the hair of its natural moisture. In order to maintain, replace or improve moisture levels and elasticity, it is absolutely imperative that black people condition the hair regularly. Condition every time you shampoo.
- Look for products containing jojoba oils, silk proteins, camomile, panthenol and aloe vera. Avoid most oils, balsams and alcohol.
- Humectants absorb moisture from the air and impart it to the hair and are important in Afro products. Look for glycerine or propylene glycol.
- The conditioner should be concentrated on tips of the hair, where damage, breakage and split ends most frequently occur.
- Conditioners and moisturisers should be applied to clean hair. They should be applied directly to the hair, not to the scalp.

REMINDERS

Experience has indicated that when a serious problem occurs due to the use of hairdressing products such as setting gels, mousse, etc, there is almost invariably a clash (reaction) between two products. That is why you are strongly advised to obtain all of your hairdressing products from the same 'stable' – that is, from the same manufacturer if possible. This will greatly minimise the risk, small as it is, of some unusual reaction damaging your hair.

Reactions between various home care products may be rare, but can be very distressing when they do happen (for example, serious matting of the hair).

The Institute of Trichologists can provide details of practitioner members who also act as expert witnesses in litigation work in the event that it becomes necessary for you to pursue a civil claim for damages.