

NATURE'S BEST: In its original state, hair is this soft and shiny. To get yours back into shape, eat a balanced diet and treat your strands with gentle care.

Haven't seen the hair you were born with since . . . well, when you were born? All of that coloring, curling, straightening and blow-drying is doing damage—but it's reversible. Get back to your roots for hair that's healthy, vibrant and simple to style.

hair repair

By Dina Roth Port
Photograph by Jim Jordan



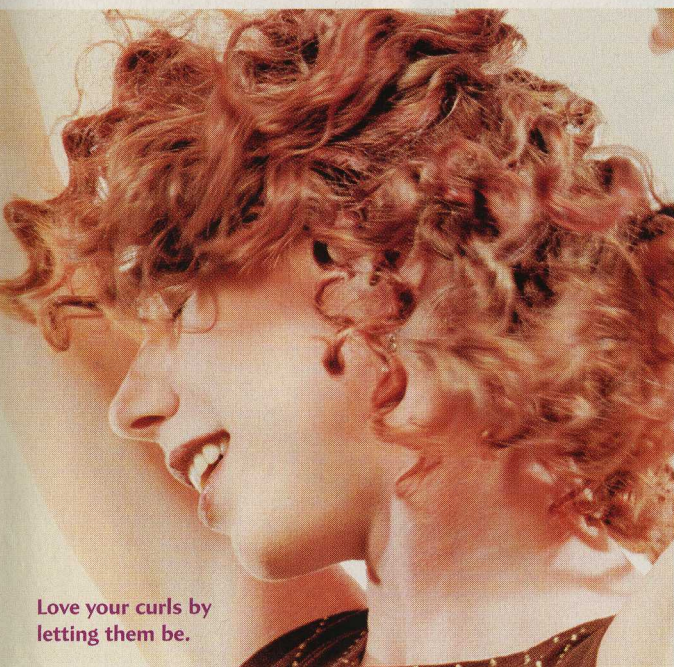
When it comes to hair, most of us want what we don't have: Those with curls spend hours ironing them into submission, those with straight locks fry them with curling irons, and brunettes dye to be blonde. In our search for a different 'do, we overlook the beautiful aspects of what we were born with—and wreck our precious strands in the process.

But before you cancel your next color appointment or throw away your blow-dryer, know that there are plenty of ways to keep your hair healthy. "One of the keys to caring for and protecting your hair is first understanding how it's structured," says New York City dermatologist Lenora Felderman, M.D. Each strand consists of three basic layers: The innermost is the medulla, which contains melanin pigments that provide color; in the middle is the cortex, which consists of proteins (called

keratin) that give hair its strength and texture; and the outer cuticle is a barrier made up of overlapping scales that shield the inner layers against damaging heat and environmental elements. These scales also reflect light to impart shine.

While hair isn't alive, it is the end result of a growth process initiated by living cells in the scalp, so what you eat can dramatically affect its appearance. Stick with a balanced diet, complete with vitamin A (colorful foods like carrots and tomatoes), folic acid (fortified cereals and green vegetables like spinach), zinc (shellfish and meat), and fatty acids (salmon and flaxseed). Eating protein-rich foods like meat, fish, nuts and soy also helps keep your hair strong.

In the end, the key to beautiful hair—curly, straight or treated—is proper care from the outside in *and* the inside out.



Love your curls by letting them be.

curly hair

On the runways and in the real world, curls are in this season. But that's not the only reason to let yours be once in a while. Hair is curly or straight depending on the angle at which the shaft comes out of the scalp—the more horizontal, the curlier; the more vertical, the straighter.

"Tugging at your curls every day while blow-drying them damages the integrity of your hair because you're stretching it," explains Christo, artistic director at Christo Fifth Avenue salon in New York City.

Dryer heat and excessive brushing can

create breaks in the cuticle, exposing the inner layers and making hair susceptible to further damage. "This heat also dries up the proteins in the cortex," says Christo. Also, straightening irons—particularly those that aren't ceramic, which distribute heat more evenly than metal—can literally fry the hair, resulting in frizzy, dull locks.

Prevent these problems by backing off the heavy-duty straightening maintenance every so often. Keeping your curls from becoming overly dry is a good way to care for them. Curly hair is prone to dryness because natural oils tend to collect at the root. Also, because the scales of curly hair's cuticle layers don't lie closely on top of one another, the inner layers are more exposed and lose moisture easily.

Overwashing strips away natural oils, so shampoo every other day at most. Scrub at the scalp, where the oils are concentrated, and let the lather rinse through the rest of your hair. Use a mild purifying shampoo such as **Bumble and Bumble Curl Conscious** (\$18; bumbleandbumble.com), which contains transglutaminase, a curl-enhancing enzyme that fights heat and humidity, which can make curls limp; or try **Phytocurl Curl Enhancing Shampoo** (\$20; 800-557-4986) with maté, a South American tea leaf known for its stimulating properties, and mild cleansers to keep curls light and bouncy. Dry, curly hair needs a daily conditioner that seals the cuticles and fights frizz as well; use **Infusium 23 Leave-In Treatment** (\$6; at drugstores), with 23 provitamins that work on the surface to smooth away frizz. Also, you'll greatly benefit from a monthly conditioning mask like **Curlisto Deep Therapy Masque** (\$30; curlisto.com), with amino acids that mimic keratin and help restore natural proteins

and oils you may have lost.

For styling and finishing, look for products that are oil- or water-based, not alcohol-based. Try curl-enhancing lotions like **Aveda's Be Curly** (\$16; aveda.com), which contains organic marshmallow root and flaxseed oil and helps curls keep their shape without being sticky, and **Frédéric Fekkai's Luscious Curls** (\$18; sephora.com), with ginseng and honey nectar to add elasticity. Apply these after gently towel-drying your hair, then comb through or use your fingers to evenly distribute the products.

straight hair

Straight hair has so much potential: The scales of the cuticle can lay flat against the hair shaft, creating a smooth surface that reflects light in unison—this gives hair its shine. Unfortunately, blow-drying and overwashing can leave it lifeless, especially if your hair is fine. "Straight hair loses its edge when you're rough with it because the protective scales of the cuticles can fray like denim, causing strands to lose their ability to reflect light," says Philip B., owner of salons in Chicago and Los Angeles.

The first step for keeping a straight mane in shape is getting it trimmed every four to six weeks. "You need to cut off those split ends often," suggests Philip B. "If you don't, the separation can travel right up the hair shaft, making it more fragile and potentially causing it to break somewhere in the middle of the strand." Straight hair, unlike curly, also lacks the texture to hide imperfections, so breakage is often very apparent. Prevent split ends by cutting back on blow-drying.



Not born a blonde? Colored hair needs special care.

Any buildup (from products, natural oils or dirt) in straight hair can weigh it down and make it look greasy, so look for cleansers with purifying ingredients that will keep hair clear of residue—preferably ones that are free of harsh sulfate detergents. Our favorite: **Flawless Repairing Shine Shampoo** (\$6; at Walgreens), with cleansing, astringent burdock root and avocado oil, which is rich in essential fatty acids. Or, for a once-a-week buildup-removal treatment, try **John Masters Organics Herbal Cider Hair Rinse & Clarifier** (\$17; johnmasters.com), with organic apple cider vinegar. And always use a lightweight, nourishing conditioner or detangler like **Paul Mitchell Lite Detangler** (\$14; paulmitchell.com) to seal the cuticle shaft without weighing it down.

To add lift at the roots, look for water-based volumizing products, such as **Joico K-Pak Thermal Designing Foam** (\$14.95; 800-445-6426) and **Rusk Thicker Thickening Spray** (\$7.50; rusk1.com). As you blow-dry, flip your hair over and dry your roots at a 90-degree angle.

Coarse hair, on the other hand, needs richer shampoos and conditioners, like the luxurious **Philip B. White Truffle Shampoo**, (\$50; philipb.com), filled with 19 pure plant extracts, soy protein and truffle oil, and **Back to Basics Green Tea Reparative Conditioning Balm** (\$11; 800-456-9322), with soy proteins and vitamins. Also, look for finishing creams with emollients and serums that soften the hair cuticle. Best bets: **Wella Liquid Hair Gloss Jelly Finishing Polish** (\$10; wellusa.com), to smooth strands and deliver shine, and **Aveda Light Elements Defining Whip** (\$20; aveda.com), a creamy styling wax with organic marshmallow root and flaxseed oil.

chemically treated hair

Nowhere does the expression “the grass is always greener” ring truer than when it comes to hair color. Whether highlighting, lowlighting, bleaching, or covering grays, women are constantly coveting a new hue. That’s perfectly fine, as long as you take extra, caring steps.

“The chemicals used in these processes, like ammonia and peroxide, disrupt the scales of the cuticle and permeate both the cortex and medulla in order to change the hair,” explains Felderman. “You can do incredible damage and wind up with hair that’s weak, brittle and more susceptible to static and humidity if you don’t take the steps to protect it.”

For one, turn down the blow-dryer. “After these treatments, your hair is in shock and more fragile, so you don’t want extra heat near it until it has adjusted to the chemicals,” says Giselle, a colorist at the Pierre Michel salon in New York City. For a few days, set the dryer on cool and, as always, keep it at least six inches from your scalp. If it’s possible, air-dry your hair.

Moisturizing shampoos and conditioners made specifically for colored or treated hair contain proteins that nourish and lock in color. Good picks: **Pantene Pro-V Color Revival shampoo and conditioner** (both \$5; at drugstores), which have a UV filter and antioxidants to protect hair from the sun; **Clairol Herbal Essences Replenishing shampoo and conditioner** (both \$4; at drugstores), rich in strengthening rose hips, vitamin E and jojoba; or the antioxidant-rich **PureOlogy Hydrate shampoo and conditioner** (both \$18; pureology.com), with sunflower-seedcake extract, which offers natural protection against ultraviolet rays.

At least once a month, apply a deep conditioner, which can penetrate into the hair shaft to restore it and provide an additional outer layer of protection. “Once you’ve added chemicals to your hair, it isn’t virgin anymore, so you really need that extra treatment,” says Amina Bouchouirab, a colorist and stylist at J.F. Lazartigue in New York City.

Select products that contain vitamin E and natural oils, particularly shea butter, which provides some UV protection. These ingredients also add moisture and shine by helping to correct any chemically caused water loss. Two examples: **Lavett & Chin Ugandan Shea Butter Hair Masque** (\$40; beautyhabit.com) and **Alberto Vos Moisturizing Hot Oil Treatment** (\$4; at drugstores) with vitamin E. ♦

what’s your favorite product?

We asked top stylists and colorists to share their No. 1 picks.



“I’ve found that **Aveda Color Conserve Shampoo** and its accompanying conditioner [both \$12; aveda.com] best prevent color from fading. They’re infused with peppermint, which protects tresses from sun, water and other stresses and keeps them shiny and healthy.”

—Robin Gonsalves, master colorist and owner of Robin Michelle salon in Chappaqua, N.Y., and Robin Hood salon in Brewster

“I can’t live without **Phytodéfrisant** [\$22; sephora.com]. It smoothes and protects curly or coarse hair without making it look greasy and dull. It’s made with ferula, horseradish and garlic extracts, which straighten hair and provide terrific thermal protection.”

—Julien Farel, owner of Julien Farel Salon, New York City

“During winter months, when there’s not much humidity in the air, hair loses moisture and gets very staticky. That’s why I use **Redken Smooth Down Heat Glide** [\$15; redken.com] on my clients. It’s a leave-in treatment with light candellia wax to smooth strands and get rid of frizz, without weighing hair down.”

—Rodney Cutler, owner of Cutler Salon, New York City

“**Sebastian Laminates Gel** [\$18; sebastian-intl.com] is a lifesaver in Florida, where we have to fight humidity to keep hair straight. Its silicone base acts as a barrier so moisture can’t break through, helping prevent flyaways and frizzies.”

—Karen Andrews, stylist at Guy Anthony, Boca Raton, Fla.

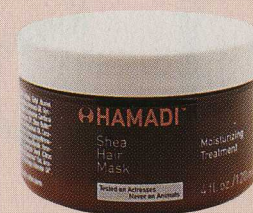
“**Desert Essence jojoba oil** [\$12; at health food stores] is an incredible natural conditioning treatment that helps bring back elasticity, which is key when the heat is cranked up and hair suffers from dehydration.”

—Sheri Zink, head colorist at Art Luna, West Hollywood, Calif.

“The **Hamadi Shea Hair Mask** [\$39; sephora.com] has a creamy texture that’s so moisturizing and it leaves hair with a healthy shine. I recommend it to clients

who’ve wrecked their hair by coloring too often. It has ylang-ylang essential oil and vanilla, so it’s like an aromatherapy spa treatment for your hair.”

—Jamal Hammadi, celebrity stylist and creator of Hamadi (sic) hair-care products



“I’m crazy about **Modern Organic Products C-system Leave-in Conditioner** [\$16; mopproducts.com], which has antioxidants that help seal in color and protect hair from free radicals. This detangler also doubles as a defining lotion, so it’s perfect for wash-and-wear.”

—Severn Dorre, senior stylist at Art and Science, Chicago