



8 Hair Mistakes You May Be Making

Always Fastening Your Ponytail in the Same Spot

Because strands tend to get caught — and broken — in bands, it's a good idea to alternate the fastening point. "Move it up a half inch one day, then down the next," says celebrity stylist Richard Marin. Using seamless elastic bands, like Goody Ouchless Elastics, will further minimize damage.

Combing Wet Hair from Roots to Ends

A comb is easier on fragile wet hair than a brush is, but tugging it from scalp to tips can cause breakage. First, smooth out knots with a leave-in detangler. Then, says Marin, start to comb at ends, working up in sections.

Brushing Your Hair for Shine

All you need is a few strokes to style hair and spread the natural oils from roots to ends. "Anything more than that is unnecessary friction, which can lead to breakage," says Amy J. McMichael, M.D., an associate professor of dermatology at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Blow-Drying Hair That's Dripping Wet

Not only will this make it difficult to style your hair, it will cause a ton of heat damage. "A blow dryer should be used on damp — not wet — hair for 20 minutes, tops," says stylist Peter Coppola, creator of a QVC hair-care line. Before applying heat, wrap hair in a towel for five minutes, then let hair air-dry for another five.

Ignoring Your Scalp

To grow healthy hair, your scalp needs nourishment. "Massaging your head with your fingertips will stimulate blood flow," says Christopher Mackin, a trichologist (hair expert) at the Gil Ferrer Salon, in New York City. For extra care, use a leave-in scap treatment.

Using the Wrong Brush

The incorrect brush can not only ruin your style, it can get snagged in your hair. Generally, the longer your locks, the larger in diameter your brush should be (basically, more hair, more brush). To create volume, use a round brush; to smooth hair, a paddle shape is best.

Avoiding Hair Spray

It's gotten a bad rap, but hair spray contains a polymer that actually locks out humidity, says Cheri McMaster, senior scientist for Pantene. And contrary to popular belief, it's not harmful. "It's the polymer, not the alcohol, that dries on your hair," she says. "The alcohol evaporates before it hits your head." Use just enough to hold your style.

Masking — Not Treating — Dandruff

Trying to nix flakes with moisturizing stylers like oils and pomades is only a temporary fix: Dandruff is actually an inflammatory scalp disease unrelated to dryness, says Dr. McMichael. The cure? A shampoo with salicylic acid, zinc, selenium sulfide or tar to eliminate flakes.

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