

## **Supplement - Cosmeceuticals - Eight common hair slayers.**

12/6/2008

### **What are the secrets when it comes to having great hair, other than good genetics?**

Most of us aren't as kind to our tresses as we should be. From highlights to lowlights, chemical perms to chemical straightening, blow drying, braiding, and bleaching, how we treat our hair has a direct impact on how healthy -- or unhealthy -- it looks.

Causing split ends, lack of lustre, or hair breakage, our styling habits play havoc on one thing we're trying to capture -- beauty. Hair experts explain the anatomy of the tresses on our head, offer insight into the damage too much styling can cause, and give advice on how to keep your locks looking luxurious.

Each hair grows about 1/4 inch every month out of a follicle on your head, and it can keep growing for up to six years. Then as part of the natural cycle of hair, it will fall out and make way for a new hair.

How long your hair is depends on how long your growing cycle lasts. If it's only two years instead of six, your hair will naturally peak at a shorter length. The same goes for the thickness of your hair: Thick hair grows out of large follicles; smaller, narrower follicles produce thinner hair.

Worse, for men and women alike, a person goes bald if the hair follicles that produce a new hair shrink in size or become inactive.

**\* The circle of life for a hair, however, depends on a lot of things, and styling is one of them:**

The more you style, the more you change the natural makeup of your hair. And although the amount and intensity of styling a person's hair can take depends on genetics, the texture of your hair, and its coarseness, less is always more when it comes to hair health.

If the cuticle of a hair is damaged as a result of overstyling, the inner core is exposed, causing dryness, a lack of luster, and static

## **CAUSES OF HAIR DAMAGE**

1. Bleaching - Bleaching your hair penetrates the cuticle with chemicals and removes your

natural pigment. You are changing the structure of your hair, making it more susceptible to damage.

Once you bleach, you've altered the strength of your hair, making it weaker. If you add blow drying and styling on top of bleaching, you can really damage your 'do, causing hair breakage, a dull look, and split ends.

**2. Perms** - Perming refers to either a chemical straightening or a chemical curling. It works by breaking the inner bonds of the hair and re-forming them back together in a different way. Like bleaching, it weakens your hair, leaving it dull and damaged over time so that instead of luxurious curly locks or shiny straight tresses, your hair looks brittle and dry.

**3. Highlights and colouring** - Highlights and semi-permanent dyes aren't as damaging as bleach, but they aren't without consequences. They can also change the inner structure of the hair, causing a lacklustre look and dryness, especially if you frequently colour to hide roots or gray hair.

**4. Flat iron and blow-drying** - Heat causes temporary changes to the hydrogen bonds that hold hair together, and that can make hair look dull. Over time, the temporary changes can lead to more permanent damage if you tend to blow dry or iron on a daily basis.

**5. Ponytails and braids** - Ponytails and braids can cause hair to break, especially if your style is pulled tightly. If you wear it that way every day, permanent hair damage can occur. Braiding or putting your hair in a ponytail when it's wet can cause damage sooner because wet hair is more fragile.

**6. Over-brushing** - Think 100 strokes a day will make your hair shiny and full? Think again. "Over-brushing your hair can cause split ends and breakage, with the over-brushing causing just too much consistent friction for hair to handle. Cheap brushes don't help either, causing snags and tangles that are hard to get out and resulting in broken hair and split ends.

**7. Over-shampooing** - The goal of shampooing is to cleanse the scalp and remove oil buildup on your hair. But over-washing can wash away your hair's natural moisture that helps your hair look healthy,

making your hair dry. Although a significant amount of research has gone into making shampoos beneficial for your hair, you can still get too much of a good thing.

The less vigorous you are in washing your hair, the less damage you'll do to the cuticle," Mi. "And find a frequency to washing your hair that works for you ... whether it's a few times a week or every day."

### **How do you know when you are overdoing it?**

"I have African-American patients who wash their Hair once a week, to avoid drying out.

8. Extensions and weaves - Extensions and weaves are a lot like ponytails and braids. Over time, they can leave hair broken and brittle. The difference is the damage is at the roots where it is harder to cut out.

"If you have a discomfort or ache in the scalp, that indicates that what you've done to your hair is causing too much pressure at the roots. Worse, traction alopecia is a serious hair loss condition caused by wearing tight hairstyles like extensions for too long a time period. So either keep it loose, or try growing your hair instead of going for instant length.  
Hair Damage Repair

"Whether it's heat, chemicals, dyes, or styling, it's all doing some degree of damage. "A good rule of thumb is, the less you do to your hair, the better."

The good news is today's products, including dyes, are much better suited to our hair than 20 years ago, with technology and research helping to make most styling products actually beneficial to our hair.

### **How can you undo some of the damage done through countless visits to the salon?**

"There are two things you can do. "First, cut off the damaged ends and start fresh. And try reducing what you're doing. ... If you notice your hair looking dull and dry, cut back on your styling until you get your hair back." The trick to keeping your hair healthy is to maintain its pH balance. "In order to close the hair cuticle and bring it back to health, you need to keep its pH balance at 4.5 -- that's the level at which your hair will look its best.. "When it starts to creep up, that's when it starts to look like straw."

### **Recommendations for maximizing hair health:**

" Always put product on your hair before you style with heat. "By putting the product on before you style, you're heating the product, not the hair.

" Use extensions and cornrows wisely.If extensions or cornrows are too tight, it can damage your roots by causing too much tension. There's a new technique where you can have extensions glued in and then removed using baby oil, but whatever way you choose, don't overdo it -- hair is strong, but it does have a breaking point.

" Cut your losses. When your hair is really damaged and dry, amputate

