

# Henna: All About This Herb for Natural Hair

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If you want a gentler, safer and more natural hair dye, consider henna. The exotic plant grows in the Eastern hemisphere's hot, dry climate, and women of this region have used its leaves for decades to stain the hair, skin and nails. Don't know much about it? Here [CurlyNikki.com](http://CurlyNikki.com) offers answers to the most frequently asked questions about henna and what you can do with it.

Is henna safer than the regular hair dyes salons use?

Yes and no. High-quality, 100 percent pure henna is much safer than standard hair dyes. This is because the henna mix stays on the hair's surface and doesn't penetrate the cortex. Henna's effects are most similar to semi-permanent hair color, and it's gentle enough to use on fragile hair. But a word of caution. Although the FDA has approved henna for use as a hair dye, the agency doesn't regulate its safety or manufacturing. Henna sellers are the only people who really know what's in their product, so they may slip in additives that make the dye's stain stronger and darker. But these additives could cause allergies, or they might react to chemicals previously in your hair. To ensure safety, buy henna from reputable suppliers known for selling a quality product.

Can I get commercial hair dye color results from henna?

It's possible. Pure henna leaf powder usually produces a red to orange-red color, which may look darker on the skin. And different henna crops produce various levels of red, ranging from auburn to cherry. If a henna is advertised as one that produces a brown or black shade, then realize it has probably been mixed with another herb or product. Also, keep in mind that henna can't lighten your hair. This means if your natural hair color is a dark black, the henna dye might produce no visible change, or just a shimmery red. But if your natural hair color is lighter, expect a color change right away. What's more, the color will increase in intensity with every treatment. (If your hair is bleached or relaxed, you'll likely notice the biggest change since chemically treated hair is more porous and allows more dye to be absorbed into its strands.)

Will henna loosen natural coils?

Maybe. The reality is everyone's hair is different. Most women who use henna report seeing looser curls after three or four treatments.

What should I look for when buying henna?

First, buy henna from a reputable supplier. Second, choose a henna with high dye content. Typically, 100 grams of pure henna contains about 2 to 3 grams of dye. To cover grey hair, you'll need the maximum dye content. If you're making your own henna paste, use an acidic liquid, such as aloe vera juice, to help the dye release faster. But if you prefer to get better results from henna use, visit a professional. You can also do it yourself at home. Try a pre-mixed henna dye bar. These bars usually contain henna, lemon juice, cocoa butter and herbs in one firm block that you just have to melt in a bowl of water.

Want some natural ways to lighten your hair? [Click here](#) to learn more.

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