Stop Split Ends Dead in Their Tracks!

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Yep. We're talkin' about that annoying fork at the end of your strands. They're called split ends, and they keep your hair from looking sleek, shiny and healthy. But not to worry! Here's how to keep your strands healthy and all in one piece, courtesy of tips from Coco and Crème.

Split ends are known scientifically as trichoptilosis. They happen when the protective outer layer of your hair cuticle is stripped away, causing a split at the ends. This nasty little disaster—most often caused by heat, excessive brushing, elastic bands, hair extensions, towel drying or dry scalp—gives your hair a feathery look and can do some major damage.

What's the big deal? Well, split ends means your strand tips are dry, and that can result in hair breakage. And when your hair breaks off, it's next to impossible to retain length.

What's more, split ends can also divide lengthwise all the way up to the scalp. That makes it almost impossible to get rid of them without a major (and probably unwanted) haircut.

While there's no cure for split ends, you can take a few simple steps to protect your precious tresses—and help you win the war for longer length. Here's how.

First do a little "dusting." This is the process of cutting less than an inch from the tip of strands when ends get crunchy, start to pop as you detangle, or when there's hair fall that's not normal shedding (shed hairs have white bulbs at the end). Get "dusted" by your favorite stylist, or trim your ends at home while hair is in braids or twists.

Next up, moisturize. Use natural oils, such as shea butter, castor oil, olive oil or almond oil, to give extra love to your ends a few times a week. (This convinces ends not to do the split.)

Then, reinforce your hair routine. That means condition after shampooing (and rinse with cool water to close the hair cuticle), detangle with a conditioner and use a monthly deep-conditioner.

Finally, protect your hair! Avoid heat whenever possible and wear protective styles such as braids or cornrows. Also, wear silk or satin scarves at night and never use elastic bands that can pull and snag hair.

Follow these tips, and those splits will, well, split in no time!

Click here for more information on how to stop split ends before they start.

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