Swim Fan: You Can Be One and Not Wreck Your Hair's Health

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Chlorinated pool water and continual friction from swimming can cause major damage to African-American hair. But several tips from Hair Liberty and CurlyNikki.com promise to protect your crowning glory while you clock laps or cool out and get refreshed with a dip in the deep end.

Rinse hair before your pool plunge. Soak your hair in the shower before you get into the pool. This allows tresses to absorb clean tap water and "fill up" so strands can't soak up as much chlorinated pool water. (Chlorine in pool water can seriously damage black hair, so make use of the usual shower nearby.) For extra protection from the water's force, thoroughly apply a silicone serum to dripping wet hair.

Pull on a swim cap, but ever so gently. Although you don't have to use them, swim caps can save your hair from those necessary but hair-killing pool-water chemicals. What's more, they also prevent friction damage. Careful though, sometimes you can lose hair when you pull off a swim cap and rip strands out. (Ouch!) Remember, if a cap causes hair loss, stop using it and just let your curls hang free.

Rinse, shampoo, condition. Perform this after-swim routine religiously once you're done swimming for the day. Thoroughly rinse then shampoo hair to rid tresses of chlorine and mineral buildup. Read shampoo labels to make sure the product contains EDTA or phytic acid. Why? If it doesn't, the shampoo can't properly remove chlorine. Follow with your usual conditioning process. (Always, always condition hair after every swim.)

Be nice to your tresses. After pool dips, hair is more sensitive than usual. So don't use direct heat on hair when styling, and don't set the blow-dryer on high. And if you want to lounge in the sun after you've rinsed your hair, wear a sun hat or a baseball cap to protect your mane from direct sunlight.

Click here for more cool summer hair-care tips.

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