Hair Savers: The Braid Extensions Prep

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Braid extensions are a fashionable and healthy way to reach your hairstyle goals. But extended wear can lead to hair breakage and in extreme cases baldness. Here's how to avoid making common mistakes, while maintaining your braids and getting the most from your style, courtesy of CurlyNikki.com.

Before the Braids

Before sitting in your stylist's chair, do some prep work at home. Braids can add a lot of extra weight and tension to your hair and scalp, so about a month before your appointment, strengthen both with a strong protein treatment and a deep conditioning. This helps ensure your strands are strong enough to accommodate the braids' added weight and your scalp is healthy enough to withstand damage. Repeat the treatment at least once more before installing braids.

Installing the Braids

Properly installed braids can maximize hair growth and allow your hair and scalp to breathe and move. Stick to these guidelines:

Section your hair into bundles smaller than half an inch by half an inch. This means less hair is incorporated into each braid and fewer strands have to bear the weight.

Never make braids bigger than the hair section. These big braids force a few strands to bear a lot of weight, which can cause hair to snap from tension.

Don't try to braid in hairline strands. The edges of your hair are fragile and more likely to break. Instead, leave out this section at the front of your hair and apply pomade to smooth down tresses. Use smaller sections of hair near your edges to avoid too much added weight.

Don't braid hair too tight. Apart from causing damage, the tightness can lead to tension, headaches and scalp bumps and sores.

Maintenance and Cleaning

Here's how to wash your braids: Split your hair into four sections. Then, apply watered-down shampoo to the scalp; rub gently to lift off dirt. If you have a lot of buildup, use a baby toothbrush to lift grease and oil. Next, rinse each section separately to avoid tangling. When braids are partially dry, gently detangle each section with your fingers. Follow up with a liquid moisturizing spray twice a day to keep your braids happy and healthy.

And, remember, you can braid it, but don't forget it! Click here to learn how to keep your braided locks healthy.

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