Oh Snap! Why Black Hair Needs Elasticity

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So why does hair elasticity matter anyway? Easy. So your strands don't break. That's why sistas who want to grow out their tresses or maintain certain voluminous styles must learn how to cultivate hair that snaps back without popping when stretched. CurlyNikki.com lists several things you should consider to better your understanding of what elasticity means and how it's affected by your hair's inner structure.

How much elasticity does your hair have? Simply put, this is a measure of how much your strands can stretch and then return to their pre-stretched size. To check how elastic your strands are, wet your hair and select several from four separate areas of your head. Next, stretch each strand one at a time. If your four strands stretch and return to their original length when released, then your hair has excellent elasticity. If your strands break or don't return to their former shape, it's likely your hair is not very elastic. But don't start fretting yet—a little more knowledge can help build your hair's resilience, so keep reading!

How thick are your strands? One major factor that influences hair's elasticity is the diameter of its strands—fine strands are weaker than thick strands, which can withstand more force. Usually, African-American hair has a smaller diameter compared with Caucasian hair. Asian hair usually has the thickest diameter. Unlike African-American hair, that means Asian hair is very elastic and can take styling wear and tear.

Why black tresses must be kept hydrated. The part of each strand that contributes most to elasticity is the interior hair shaft, or cortex. This part of the hair is composed of a complex structure of keratin protein (called fibrils) embedded within a core or matrix of high water content. Extensive bonding between water molecules and keratin protein in the hair's cortex makes strands more elastic. If hair gets too dry, then the bonding can't take place. The result? Less elasticity and more breakage-prone hair.

Why you must maintain your hair's protein structure. Besides hydration, the other major step that making strands elastic is avoiding degradation of the hair's internal protein structure. Degradation of the internal protein structure can happen when the outside cuticle layer of your hair is broken. To limit this kind of damage, have frequent trims, avoid high temperature treatments and handle the hair gently. What's more, use protein treatments and protein-containing conditioners to restore protein to damaged hair. One warning, though: These

treatments are temporary, and overuse can contribute to brittle hair.

Click here to read about how best to grow out your tresses.

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