How to Keep Natural Hair Healthy

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Going “natural” doesn’t automatically mean that your hair will be luscious and healthy. It takes consistent effort to get untreated tresses in good condition and to keep it that way. This means making sure hair experiences minimal breakage and maximum softness and shine, says Will Williams, director of education for M&M Products Company’s Sofn’free Nothing But.

The top reasons for hair breakage are dryness, styling tools and manipulating tresses into different styles. Moisture gives hair flexibility, but the solution isn’t only to add products. Before a periodic deep moisturizing and conditioning treatment, remove product buildup with a clarifying shampoo so that treatments can reach the strands. Keep styling tools at mid to low temperature settings. Why? Because high heat weakens hair. And when it comes to styles, avoid the ones that tug at fragile areas like the crown, nape and hairline. For a true rest, opt for a wash-and-go.

Proper cleansing, conditioning, and prevention are key. Once or twice monthly, use a deep-clean shampoo like sulfate-free clarifying shampoo, which is a gentle formula. This should be immediately followed by an intense conditioner. Once weekly, cleanse with a co-wash. When conditioning, avoid petrolatum and mineral oils that coat hair and prevent emollients from penetrating the hair shaft. To prevent split ends, trim hair regularly, dry it with a microfiber towel, not terrycloth, and seal moisturized ends with oils and creams. Quench hair daily with a curl refresher; plain water just evaporates.

Products that cleanse without drying, condition without stiffness, and style without crunch. Avoid petrolatum, mineral oil, sulfates, parabens, colorants or phthalates. You want formulas that add shine, but not at the expense of your hair’s overall health. But don’t be afraid of certain artificial-sounding ingredients. Some are gentle synthetics that keep formulas stable and better performing. Some are just scientific names, like tocopheryl acetate, a common form of vitamin E.

Does your natural hair shrink when wet? There are ways to handle this problem. Click here to read more.

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