



YOUR GUIDE TO *sexy* SUMMER HAIR

By **Celia Shatzman** for USA TODAY

You probably have about 5 million hairs, according to the National Institutes of Health. Many of them are on your head, where it takes about a month for them to grow just half an inch. That means they'll be with you for a while, most likely about six years. Since you'll be spending so much time together, follow these tips to keep your hair healthy and happy all summer long.

It takes about a **month** for healthy hair to grow half an inch

Damage control

› When it comes to damaged locks, overstyling is a major offender. Hair structure is much like a tree trunk, says Jeni Thomas, a hair scientist for consumer products behemoth Procter & Gamble. "You have protective layers on the outside, like bark, that shield the fragile inner core from the environment," she explains. "A lot of styling action is going on with the protective layer. Once you've eroded that layer, that's when you get split ends, because that core is not meant to be exposed to the environment."

As hair ages, it gets weaker and more susceptible to damage. "Shoulder-length hair is already two to three years old; it may have seen 700 to 1,000 days of styling," says Thomas. "The effects accumulate over time, and if you're not taking care of your hair, then you're leaving it more susceptible to breakage."

Split-end treatments can help temporarily bind the frayed ends and prevent damage from getting worse. But you'll need to apply product every time you wash. The only permanent fix is to get a haircut. Thomas suggests trimming hair every six to eight weeks. "Keep the ends clean, because once they start to unravel, the damage moves upward very quickly."

Instead of using heat or back-combing to style—which can harm tresses—opt for products to get the look you want.

THE TAKEAWAY Cut back on the styling and trim hair often to help prevent split ends.

THINKSTOCK



Good eats

› A well-balanced diet is crucial for a healthy, shiny mane. **“Hair consists of 90 percent protein, so you definitely need a protein-rich diet,”** says Thomas. That’s why crash diets can wreak havoc on your locks. Without enough protein, hair grows out weaker, thinner, and more prone to damage. “It needs a constant source of vitamins and minerals to stay healthy. It’s very important to have iron and zinc in your food. Eat lots of greens, spinach, beans, and legumes, since all of those have iron and nutrients that are important for healthy hair.” Thomas also recommends taking a multivitamin to make sure all of your bases are covered.

THE TAKEAWAY Nourish your body and your hair with a healthy diet.

Brush stroke

› Remember that old adage about brushing your hair 100 strokes each night? As it turns out, that’s a terrible idea. “Brush as little as possible,” says Thomas. “The only benefit is distributing scalp oils, which protects and moisturizes your hair.”

So use your brush sparingly. “People often tug the brush through hair, but that can scratch the surface and even pull hair from the scalp,” says Thomas. “Very gentle brushing is best.”

And never brush hair when it’s wet and most susceptible to damage. Instead, use a wide-tooth comb on damp hair. Once your hair is dry, brush just enough to get the look you want.

THE TAKEAWAY Brush as little and as carefully as possible.

HOLD ONTO YOUR HAIR

➔ Myths abound when it comes to thinning hair. While hair loss can be caused by a number of things, the most common cause is age. As we get older, our hair starts to thin. Scientists aren’t sure exactly why, but from the early teens on, the number of hairs we grow declines.

And starting in our 30s, the diameter of each strand starts to shrink.

It’s not usually until around age 40 that the combination of shrinking diameter and reduced growth becomes noticeable.

While there’s no way to prevent hair from thinning, you can delay the onset and slow its progress. “Having a very healthy diet, exercising, and taking care of yourself will help to stop the process from starting early,” says Jeni Thomas, a hair scientist for consumer products manufacturer Procter & Gamble. Keep in mind that excessive hair thinning can be a sign of illness, so consult your doctor if you notice a dramatic change.



Clean scene

› The scalp is constantly producing oils, which are then distributed throughout the hair. The rate and pattern of distribution are affected by the hair’s texture. Straight, fine hair is more susceptible to oiliness (it’s a lot easier for the oil to slide down a straight surface than a curly or wavy surface) and needs to be shampooed more frequently. On the flip side, if your hair is wavy or curly, it’s more difficult for the scalp oils to move down the hair shaft, keeping the hair from looking oily. So people with wavy or curly hair can usually get away with washing their hair less often.

“When it comes to how often you wash, it’s really a personal and lifestyle choice,” says Thomas. “If you’re in the gym every day, you probably want to wash more often. A lot of people who live in crowded, dirtier cities need to shampoo more frequently because hair will absorb pollutants.”

THE TAKEAWAY Determine how often to shampoo based on your hair’s texture and your lifestyle.

Heat protection

➤ You already know that blow-drying can damage your hair. So let it air-dry for as long as possible. But if that isn't an option, keep your blow-dryer on the lowest setting and use it until hair is just slightly damp. Then, increase the heat setting to help create your style as your hair transitions from slightly damp to dry. "Hair is made up of proteins bound together by permanent bonds," explains Thomas. "Wet hair has certain temporary bonds, and that's what controls your style. These bonds form between proteins when hair is dried, and they can take on a number of different patterns, depending on how they are arranged when hair is styled."

Thomas recommends using a heat-protection product to reduce damage.

Leave-in creams are great for thicker and curlier tresses, while sprays are better for finer hair.

THE TAKEAWAY Use heat sparingly and pair it with heat-protection products.



Flake patrol

➤ Suffering from dandruff? You're not alone. Studies say about 50 percent of people experience it at one point or another. **"Scalp oil is a key contributor to dandruff. That's why it's so important to wash on a regular basis,"** says Thomas. "The longer you wait to wash, the longer it builds up."

Shampooing more often may help to reduce flakes, but it won't address itchiness or scalp irritation. The most effective way to keep it at bay is to use dandruff-specific products.

THE TAKEAWAY Take care of dandruff with scalp-treating shampoos and more frequent washings.



Brushing Up

"It's really important to get a brush that's good for your hair type," says Dee Malan, co-owner of a New York City salon named 3. When it comes to bristles, choose your material carefully. For fine hair, Malan recommends a boar-bristle brush. **Boar-bristle brushes grab better than nylon ones because the brushes are more densely bristled,** he says. "For medium to thick hair, opt for a combination of nylon and boar bristles, while those with very thick strands should use nylon." The fewer bristles there are, the easier it is to get the brush through your hair. Try adding one of Malan's must-have brushes to your arsenal.

1. ROUND BRUSH

Choose a medium to large version with a 2- to 3-inch barrel. **This brush is ideal for smoothing hair while blow-drying and works for every hair type.** "I'm really big on blow-drying curl into the hair, so I use the brush like a roller and move it constantly so that I keep the heat steady," says Malan. "If I'm working with really coarse hair, I also use it as a straightening tool by keeping lots of tension on the brush." A metal and wood barrel holds the heat better than plastic, helping dry the hair faster and set the style.

Revlon Perfect Style 100 percent boar-bristle round brush, \$9.99, ULTA stores

2. PADDLE BRUSH

For thick or tangle-prone locks, use a paddle brush instead of a wide-tooth comb for wet hair. "These brushes tend to not grab and stretch hair as much as other brushes do," says Malan.

Revlon Moonlight Paddle Brush, \$6.99, ULTA stores

3. CUSHION BRUSH

Look for a combination of synthetic and boar bristles. These brushes provide a soft touch and are designed for sensitive hair and scalps. "The rubber creates sheen, and the bristles stimulate the scalp and distribute natural oils through hair," Malan says.

Sarah Potempa On Set Styling Brush, \$42, SarahPotempa.com

4. VENT BRUSH

These brushes expedite the drying process. "They're really good for getting out more moisture than you can with a towel, because the air is free flowing all the way through thanks to the holes in the brush," Malan says. **For smooth locks, use the brush to lift hair up and away from the roots.** Be sure to buy versions that have small balls on the ends of the bristles to prevent hair from snagging.

John Frieda Styling Tools by Conair Vent Brush, \$12.99, drugstore.com