



Now you've embraced your beautiful curly hair, understanding it and knowing how to care for it will help you get the best from your curls.

Curl Care

CHAPTER 2



Curl types

So your curls are unruly, but what else do you know about them?

Hair can be classified into four main types: straight, wavy, curly and kinky. If you're reading this, you probably don't belong to the first group!

Wavy hair lies between straight and curly. It can be resistant to styling and prone to frizz.

Curly hair has more definite, S-shaped curls. Many of my clients have this hair type, which is considered the most temperamental. But don't

worry – follow the advice in this book and your life will be made easier.

Kinky hair tends to be fine and fragile, made up of tightly coiled curls in a zigzag pattern. It requires delicate handling and tons of moisture to stay healthy.

Even across the scalp, hair differs, and over time it can change a lot in colour and shape.

How do I look after my curls?

Keeping your beautiful curls happy and healthy is simple if you follow a few basic pointers.

WASHING If you have long or thick curly hair, a powerful shower will help a great deal. Using a jug to rinse hair is okay, but will take much longer. Start by fully soaking your hair from root to tip. Shake the excess water out of your hair and spread a small amount of shampoo across wet hands.

The main aim of washing is to clean your hair at the roots and maintain good scalp health. Focus on the roots rather than the lengths to avoid drying out your hair. Wash with small, circular motions using your fingertips, avoiding scrubbing aggressively with your nails, which will irritate your scalp. If you select a strong shampoo, washing will take less time. If you go for a gentler shampoo you will need to work harder in place of the chemicals. Don't go overboard, or your hair will become overly stressed.

CO-WASHING Co-washing is a fantastic option if you find your hair dry and difficult to hydrate. It is simply doing away with shampoo and using conditioner to wash your hair instead. There are products marketed specifically as co-wash or conditioning cleansers. These are intended to be the missing link between a shampoo, which typically will dry some curly hair out, and straight-up conditioner, which can often leave hair heavy or feeling clogged. A co-wash will both cleanse your hair and condition it at the same time. I encourage my clients to try shampooing much less often, focusing their efforts on how, rather than with what. To co-wash, simply wet your hair, and use conditioner as a shampoo. It won't lather, so it will feel strange, but get stuck in and rinse well and you will find your hair can feel just as clean as with shampoo.

CONDITIONING Apply conditioner to your hair and do not cover your scalp too much. Be careful when combing through your hair and don't allow yourself a false sense of it doing less damage. When hair is wet it has three times the elasticity of dry hair. Wet hair covered with conditioner will allow hands and combs to slip through easily, while preventing you from getting a real sense of how your hair is being pulled. A brush going through wet conditioned hair will further remove the sensation of how knotty your hair is. This means you might be likely to brush your hair much more firmly than you would if it wasn't wet or covered in conditioner, leading to greater risk of breakage and split ends. Be aware of this and be gentle at all times. Even if your hair is slippery and conditioned, make sure to comb gently to preserve those luscious locks.

DEEP CONDITIONING Although I firmly believe that hair can only be superficially made to feel repaired until the next wash, I still appreciate the benefit of deep conditioning even if it is superficial. If it assists with managing your hair and prevents further damage it is still a good thing. I often negotiate with a client that is unwilling to cut away all the damaged hair by agreeing that they should invest time and effort in thoroughly hydrating it with the treatment, wrapping it when applied, allowing the heat to open up the hair's cuticle and saturate deep within. Rinsing thoroughly with cool or even cold water will cause porous hair to close up quickly, sealing some of the deep conditioner into the cavities that exist in damaged hair. Wear it naturally dried for as long as possible to give your hair time to appreciate the deep conditioner.



COMBING V. BRUSHING

There is a big difference between when you should use a brush instead of a comb. See pages 78–79 to find out more.

Products

Products fall into four main categories: washing, conditioning, styling and colouring, and the wealth of choice demonstrates that products are big business, especially for curly-haired people for whom the wash 'n' run option isn't really viable. Using a different product than your regular one can have a noticeable effect on how your hair looks, feels and smells and many people switch regularly in search of the perfect one. The creativity of manufacturers seems to be never-ending, as they strive to produce the next big thing, claiming to do all sorts of wonders for us with one new fantastic ingredient after the other. I am dubious about the bigger claims and would urge you to be wary of any self-proclaimed miracle workers!

Wet-look, firm-hold gel or mousse, and wax. These were my everything when I was a young, curly-haired boy in Kent.

SHAMPOO The shampoo you use to wash your hair and exactly how you wash your hair are equally important. Shampoos all work differently. If your shampoo is too strong, it might make your hair dry; too weak and it might be ineffective. You may need to experiment with a few good-quality shampoos (see my favourites on page 111) to find out what works for you.

A word on sulphates. Used in shampoos, sulphates are surfactants (molecules that have been engineered to attract both oil and water), hence their ability to remove oil from hair. Natural cleansing agents such as tea tree, eucalyptus and others do cleanse, but are usually less effective than ingredients such as sodium lauryl sulphate or sodium laureth sulphate. These are used in shampoos because they are effective. They are capable of washing hair very well, as long as they are used alongside other ingredients that negate their drying ability, such as conditioners.

It doesn't take much shampoo to do a good job. If possible, it's better to use less shampoo so that your hair does not suffer from build-up of product. If you gradually reduce the amount of shampoo you use, and wash with more physical effort, you won't need so much product and can even eventually replace full-strength shampoo with a mild cleanser. Gently massage your scalp and hair with your hands, using only a little shampoo but plenty of water and friction to rid it of dust, dirt and dry skin.

In the salon, we use sulphate-, mineral oil-, additive-, paraben- and silicon-free Cantu Cleansing Cream shampoo (see page 111). It is inexpensive, effective and kinder to curly hair than many available. We experiment with new shampoos all the time but also prefer to demonstrate how being minimal with shampoo can reap good results.

CONDITIONERS Conditioners are definitely a friend of curly hair, whether you use shampoo or are completely shampoo-free. They make life with curly hair much easier. The better moisturised your hair, the healthier and easier to work with it will be.

I recommend using several different conditioners: one that is cheaper and thicker to use when detangling; another that is possibly more expensive, but better at moisturising and hydrating hair for less frequent use. Find a deep conditioner that rinses out without weighing the hair down and becoming tacky, attracting dirt and suffocating the scalp.

CURL DEFINING Curl-defining products are the Holy Grail to the curly-haired person keen on controlling and maximising the beauty of their curls. Bear in mind, though, that over time those products with huge amounts of alcohol or low-grade silicones eventually build up or dry hair out.

The main characteristics I look for are products that don't flake when scrunched into the hair, and those that don't feel sticky or tacky. I find hair that is

styled with a sticky product, or one that loses its ability to hold curls after being touched, rarely survives a night's sleep.

Many products that tick all the styling boxes can fail to leave curly hair shiny, but have a matte, dulling effect instead. Experiment with what suits your hair. As ever, I am a proponent of the 'less is more' approach when it comes to these products: learn how to use it, but use less of it.

OILS I am a tremendous believer in the benefit of using oil on your scalp. Not excessively, but as a way to mimic the natural functioning of your scalp's own production until you manage to achieve a good look relying solely on your own oils.

Oils such as argan, sweet almond and coconut have nutritional value and can benefit your scalp and hair as their viscosity is close to that of our own sebum, therefore helping to hydrate and lubricate it. The best thing about pure oils is that they don't contain chemicals found in many products, and the minerals and vitamins encourage hair growth.

HEAT PROTECTION There is nothing, really, that will fully protect your hair from the heat of most styling tools, as they use temperatures ranging from 90–300°C (200–570°F). You can still use these tools, but understand that any intense heat application can damage the hair over time, so my recommendation is to only use them occasionally.