



Hair & Skin Care Advice

Whether you are caring for a black or biracial child, or are simply looking to educate yourself, you have come to the right place. This guide is designed to support anyone trying to navigate where to start and aims to give you basic advice on how to maintain children's hair and skin.



Background

Senior Practitioner Sheree Von-Claire has written this guide to provide valuable advice for those caring for children of Afro-Caribbean heritage. Drawing from her personal experiences and numerous sources including advice from Health Visitors and Midwives, Sheree offers practical tips, along with helpful resources such as how-to videos and recommendations for products that are readily available on the high street.

Hair

Afro hair is an important part of many people's cultural identities, so taking good care of it is vital for keeping it healthy and looking its best.

Children of Afro-Caribbean heritage should not always have their hair left loose. Instead, protective styles using the correct products are often necessary.

Advice for styling afro hair

Styling hair is a fantastic opportunity for you to bond with a child. It gives the message that they are worth the time you are spending on them.

The First Stages of Styling

Make sure that you follow some key rules:

- When styling hair, oil it well first.
- Do not pull the hair up into a ponytail or simple bunches every day as it will break the hair and cause the hairline to recede.
- Regularly change where partings are and do not have the same style all the time, as this will create too much stress in certain areas, which can also cause breakage and receding of the hair line.
- You can use a combination of methods to make a style.

Styles

Cornrowing



These pictures demonstrate cornrows (close to the head) and then plaits for the full length of the hair.

Cornrows (sometimes called canerows) are a style of traditionally using three small sections of hair to braid very close to the scalp, using an underhand, upward motion to make a continuous, raised row. To have the rows sitting on the top, hair should be cornrowed using a middle to outside method.

Cornrows only stay neat for a few days in fine hair but can keep much longer in hair that is thicker or more textured.

The woman in the tutorial talks about working with dry hair, which is great on healthy hair that can easily be oiled afterwards; however, if the child's hair has been neglected, working with dry hair is not recommended as it is likely to cause discomfort and breakage.



Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to watch a tutorial

Plaits/Braids



Click here or scan the QR code to watch a tutorial

Photos shown are of basic plaits that have been banded at the root, then crossed over each other. The colourful bands make the style look more expressive/intricate.

Plaits, also known as braids, are a hairstyle typically formed by dividing sections of hair into three equally sized portions that are interwoven together. Plaits can be worn in a variety of ways, including as a braid, a bun, or a ponytail.

Banding



Click here or scan the QR code to watch a kids rubber band tutorial



Click here or scan the QR code to watch a bubble hairstyle tutorial

Banding without plaiting is a simple style to try. This can also be done in larger sections or even just two rows going back – which is great for younger children who will not sit for long. Banding is a style that can be used for quickness and if you struggle to plait hair.

Bantu Knots



Click here or scan
the QR code to
watch a tutorial

Bantu Knots is a hairstyle featuring tightly coiled sections that almost resemble popcorn. The style is achieved by sectioning the hair, twisting each section, then wrapping it around the base, and using a small band to secure.

Combining Styles – Twists and Cornrows



Twists, when well oiled, mixed with two simple cornrows are a beautiful, protective, and very quick hairstyle for naturally curly or wavy hair.

Washing and hair maintenance

Hairstyles should only be kept in for 2-3 days at a time for children. This is to keep their hair looking well cared for and to prevent breakage or tension alopecia.

If the child has a protective hairstyle (cornrowed or single plaited), it can be left for a few weeks if the style still looks good, and the roots/scalp being oiled every 3-5 days. Hair does not need washing while kept in a protective style, but it can be if required. Always ensure that hair is thoroughly dried and then re-oiled after washing.

Washing

Unless the child has a regularly active lifestyle, (for example swimming or sports every day), hair should not be washed more than every 7-10 days, or it will become brittle, dry, and break. Always use shampoos and conditioners that are specific for the child's hair type.

- Afro hair should be completely combed through before it is washed; otherwise, the washing process will tangle it to the point it is near impossible to comb. Hair needs to be held near the root and combed from the ends, working upwards to the scalp.
- Washing hair would include two shampoos, ensuring that all the old product is washed out, then a condition.
- It helps to use a detangler to comb through hair when the conditioner is still on, (before the final rinse is done); then rinse the hair downwards without ruffling too much to prevent tangles reforming.
- Afro hair shrinks a lot during the washing process, so it is a good idea afterwards to single plait in large sections when still wet, oil the scalp and hair of one section at a time, and gently blow dry it back out using a bristle brush to softly pull back to full length. Hairdryers with afro pick attachments can sometimes be used too.

Removing Plaits with Extensions

When undoing single plaits where extensions have been used, rub the plaits upwards to see clearly where the natural hair will stick/poke out of the individual plait, and cut below this level, that way you won't cut actual hair and nor will you need to undo the entire length of each individual plait, making the process quicker.

Hair Products

There will be an element of trial and error with products as the texture of the child's hair can differ vastly. It is wise to seek advice from a hairdresser as they can assess the texture of the child's hair and advise.

Leave-in Conditioners and Curl Activators (Enhancers)

These products are best used on damp or towel dried hair. For hair being left loose, they lock in moisture without hair being too oily, and they can help to activate curls and waves. Leave-in conditioners and curl activators can also be used with protective and other styles.

Oils and Curl Enhancers

Hair oil is an essential product to maintain the health of afro hair because the thick and coiled texture prevents the natural oils from the scalp (sebum) penetrating the hair shafts. Without oil, hair will become excessively dry and will break. Hair should be parted all over and oiled on the scalp, not just on the hair itself.

Brands

There are 100's of brands to choose from based on personal preference and hair type. Great hair care products for black and biracial children can be found in the kid's "Cantu," "Luster's Pink" and "Curly Kids" ranges. They are all easy to purchase. If you cannot access a culture specific shop, Boots, Sainsbury's, and Superdrug stores sell Cantu, or you can look online. Alternatively, hair specific products containing coconut oil or olive oil can be used.

Hair Accessories

Extra wide pick
detangling comb



Double row
detangling comb



Regular
detangling comb



Detangling comb, Tail comb & Bristle brush

It is important to purchase a good sturdy, detangling comb. Places like Tesco, Sainsbury's, Superdrug, and Boots generally offer a good range. Any of these types of combs are great in natural afro hair, even on wash day. For styling it will also be useful to purchase a tail comb for parting, and a bristle brush to smooth or sculpt edges. Toothbrushes can also be used for sculpting.

Du-Rag

A Du-Rag is a fine chiffon (or similar material) head scarf. Satin bonnets and wave caps are often referred to by the same name. They should be worn on hair overnight to hold styles and prevent products from getting onto pillowcases or faces while sleeping. They are not expensive and can be bought on the internet easily.



Advice on what to look for in a barber/hairdresser.

There are numerous hair studios that cater for children's hair, and some also provide short college type training courses for people who want to learn. A Google search for your area is worth doing if you have nobody to ask. Even salons that cannot assist you directly, should be able to point you in the right direction.

Skin care

Midwives and Health Visitors have started to recommend not using any products on newborn babies for the first few weeks after birth until all vernix is absorbed and skin has matured naturally. If a baby's skin is excessively dry/cracked, please seek advice from a GP or other health professional.

With regards to skin care for older infants and children, the general rule of thumb is that skin is dryer the darker it is. Non-white skin can crack and become uncomfortable. Various products will be required depending on the time of year and the child's skin tone.

It is important to always oil every inch of skin from head to toe at least once, every day. If not, skin will become dry, ashy looking, very itchy, and more prone to scarring. Oils and creams are easier rubbed in straight after a bath or shower.

Body

The skin on the body will require stronger moisturising products in the colder months, than it will do in the warmer months.

Colder Months

Use a product that is oil based, for example the tubbed versions of E45 or Astral, Cocoa Butter, Double Base cream, or the white bottle/navy lid Nivea lotion.

Warmer Months

Use slightly lighter products in the warmer months, for example the navy bottle/white lid Nivea lotion, aqueous cream, daily E45 Cream or bottled E45 lotion.

Face

The skin on faces does not require the same strength of product as the skin on the rest of the body. Children's E45, daily E45, or aqueous cream are fine for the face all year round.

Lips easily, and continually, become dry and licking them makes this worse, so it is handy to provide a small pot of Vaseline for children to carry with them.

In the sun

Non-white skin can burn too, so needs to have sun cream applied. Regular sun creams, while effective, do not rub in, so clear lotions/oils are the best option. Nivea Sun range does a great factor 50 transparent oil.

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