

# Healthy Habits and Goals for Beautiful Hair and Skin



**G**orgeous hair and skin are two of our most visible assets. Healthy skin feels great, too. Hair that is beautiful and well-arranged will free up energy that can be used in other areas of life.

Since each person's hair and skin are unique, a mind-boggling array of techniques and products are available for care. Choose natural, plant-based products. Avoid products with potentially irritating synthetic ingredients, as well as oil-based products that the skin cannot absorb. Healthy habits can be challenging to develop, but can be incorporated into our daily lives.

Jean Zhao, owner of Happy Feet and Hand Spa, says the Chinese recommend a good head massage for five to 10 minutes for healthy skin and hair. Mark Twain was famous for his thick head of hair, which he attributed to a daily five-minute head massage. Zhao emphasizes that eating plenty of fruits and vegetables is essential for beautiful hair and skin.

**Skin:** To have skin like a baby's bottom, treat it like a baby's bottom—very gently. Nutrition and hydration are important. Laura Rues, naturopathic doctor at Kansas City Integrative Health, says, "The skin is the largest organ of the body, and it often is a window into a person's internal environment. Acne, dry skin, and yellowing of the skin can be signs of other health conditions, including hormone irregularities or liver disorders." Even dehydration affects our skin. Dr. Rues continues, "Many of us don't get enough water throughout the day. Dehydration makes your skin look dry, dull and wrinkled. Ensuring adequate fluid intake (half your body weight in ounces of water daily) is not only good for the health of your skin, but also your overall health." Healthy skin feels vibrant and alive. Skin care is made up of four parts: cleansing, moisturizing, protecting, and decorating.

**Cleansing:** Each morning and night, cleanse the skin. To avoid transferring unhealthy elements from your hands to your face, wash hands repeatedly until the soap bubbles appear white. Then, wash face and neck with a product of your choice, using your hands or clean, white cotton washcloth. Nian Zhao of Happy Feet and Hand Spa said that her mother uses rice water (the water left from rinsing rice) to wash her face, a custom common in China. After washing, gently pat your skin dry with a clean white cotton cloth. The final step in cleansing is toning. Using upward motions, use a cotton pad doused with a small amount of toner over the face and neck to remove the remaining residues before moisturizing.

**Moisturizing and protecting:** A variety of products are available for moisturizing. Products made with fruit acids can exfoliate chemically to reduce wrinkles. Sensitive eye areas require specially designed moisturizers. Apply eye creams with the ring finger moving out from the center of the face. During the day, use moisturizers with sunscreen. At night, use a more rich cream. Nurturing serums and neck creams are also available. Be creative. Layering moisturizing products can promote youthful-looking skin for your unique skin type.

**Decorating.** If you choose, use a foundation and fix it with powder. Blushes, eye colors, and lipsticks can enhance any face.

**Hair:** Lackluster hair can be an indicator of stress, lack of sleep and poor habits. Individuals with short hair can tolerate the damaging effects of hair dryers, as well as harsh treatments and products. Long hair requires special care.

**Combing and brushing hair:** Hair is elastic and tears easily. Gently brush or comb long hair. Use a wide-toothed comb. Ms. Zhao said that the Chinese use wooden or horn combs to avoid creating electricity, resulting in smoother hair. Use a natural bristle brush to keep hair long and strong. Avoid plastic bristles, which tear.

**Shampooing:** Experiment with shampoos and conditioners to find one that you like. Harsh shampoo, like those used to avoid dandruff, can dry the scalp. Steer toward gentle products like those made from natural ingredients. Change products from time to time. Before shampooing, braid long hair loosely to avoid tangling. When washing, start with the scalp first and work toward the ends. After rinsing, condition the ends first and work up the hair to the scalp.

**Drying:** Avoid using hair dryers, as the heat will cause hair to break. After towel drying, allow the hair to dry naturally. If going out while it is wet, put the hair up into a bun or use clips.

**Using oils:** Oil produced by the scalp rarely reaches the ends of long hair. Applying oils and conditioners keeps hair nourished and reduces splitting. Dousing the hair and scalp with ample cold-pressed virgin olive oil once a month will do wonders. It is amazing how much oil the scalp and hair will absorb. Work as much oil as possible into the scalp and hair. Then slowly and gently use a wide-toothed (wooden or horn) comb to cover each strand with oil. Work tangles out carefully to avoid tearing. Tie the hair up and leave the oil in as long as possible



— up to 24 hours. (Ayurveda oil mixtures specifically for hair, as well as coconut oil work, too.) Then use plenty of shampoo to wash the hair, being careful around the edges of the hairline to remove excess oil. Otherwise, the hair will feel and appear gummy when it dries.

**Other hair-care tips.** Use clips that don't tear or one-time use rubber bands that can be cut or broken before removing. Covering the hair to protect it from the elements, like the sun, can be protective. To avoid sun damage, use products with sunscreen. Before bed, braid the hair loosely to avoid tangles.

**Summary.** Beautiful skin and hair enhance our lives and well-being. Discovering and incorporating self-care habits that fit your unique needs will provide the freedom to enjoy your physical being more and the time and energy to focus on other areas of your life.

**Editor's note:** We recommend avoiding parabens and sodium laurel sulphate in all hair and skin products.

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