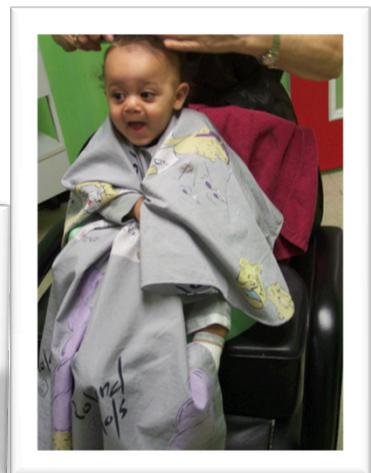


# Black Hair & Skin Care





Black hair is beautiful and extremely versatile. However, it needs to be treated with gentle respect at all times. This is your child's crowning glory, an expression of individuality.

As parents of a Black or Biracial child, hair and skin care is one of the many important things to learn about.

Adoption STAR offers an annual Hair and Skin Care Workshop to assist you in your understanding of such care and to begin to empower you to learn how you can better take care of your child's hair and skin. This booklet is just the beginning as we encourage you to speak to Black hair care professionals, and to thoroughly explore the resources within this document.

Our most important message to you is to please be very conscious of your child's appearance. If your child's skin appears very dry or your child's hair appears brittle and is not styled, then your child will always appear as if he or she is a Black child in a Caucasian home.

Take the time to take care of your child's hair as this will assist in building your child's racial and cultural self-esteem. As your child gets older, he or she will easily transition in continuing with the appropriate care if it is introduced early on.

## **General Black Hair Care Advice**

### *For The Transracial Adoptive Parent*

Black and biracial babies may develop thick, coarse, curly or wavy hair that requires parents to care for their children's hair and skin differently than their own. Because of its texture and curl pattern, Black hair tends to be dry and prone to breakage so it needs to be treated gently.

Here is some advice on how to keep your baby's hair clean, moisturized, and tangle-free:

#### *Washing*

Many Caucasians wash their hair as frequently as once a day to remove excess oil. But African American hair does not produce as much oil. Over washing can strip away the natural oils of the scalp and leave hair dry, brittle, and frizzy. Instead, wash your baby's hair only once a week using a mild baby shampoo.

#### *Combing and Detangling*

Black hair may tangle easily. Comb out the tangles carefully to prevent breakage by:

- Using a wide-tooth comb or soft-bristle brush.
- Never trying to comb out hair when it's dry.
- Applying a small amount of oil or cream to help detangle hair.

#### *Moisturizing*

Your baby's hair should be soft and manageable. Finding the right routine will depend on your baby's hair texture, so you may need to experiment with different products. When seeking hair care products for a child, consider:

- Creating your own moisturizer by mixing sweet almond oil or light virgin olive oil with natural ingredients such as rosemary or lavender.
- Looking for natural products such as jojoba oil, emu oil, avocado oil, virgin coconut oil, or almond oil.

Distribute just a small amount of the moisturizer onto your fingertips and gently massage through the baby's hair and onto the scalp as well.

Children may be sensitive or allergic to some ingredients so watch closely for unusual reactions or breakouts. Avoid products with mineral oil or petroleum jelly because they tend to clog the pores.

#### *Styling*

Keeping a newborn's hair loose and natural allows the hair follicles to grow stronger. As your child gets older, try different styles, such as ponytails, plaits, and braids.

To avoid breakage, start by using a wide-tooth comb or soft bristle brush to detangle. Then comb or brush from the roots down to the ends.

After parting your child's hair, tie off the sections you are not working with so you can concentrate on one area at a time.

When styling your baby's hair in braids or ponytails use smooth hair bands to hold the hair in place. Avoid using rubber bands as they may cause excessive hair breakage.

## **Caring for Your African American or Biracial Child's Hair**

By Mahisha Dellinger, CEO and Founder, <http://www.curls.biz>

Caring for your angel's tresses can be a daunting experience, but it doesn't have to be. Armed with the proper education, the right technique, and, most importantly, the right products – you can master the art of caring for ethnic hair.

For as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated with hair. Because my hair was easy to manage, I began styling my own hair at an early age. Using my long locks, I taught myself how to French-braid and soon became a styling expert (or so I thought). As I matured, my interest in healthy Black hair peaked. I learned which hair care ingredients were good for my hair type and which ingredients were not. I learned how to shampoo, condition, and properly handle my hair. Most importantly, I learned to love my hair. With the proper care, your child will love his/her hair too!

Over the years I've read, seen, and experienced unbelievable acts of ignorance regarding ethnic hair care. It is my attempt to provide a few basic tips and tricks so you will avoid common pitfalls

### **A Few Things You Should Know, As Your Child Grows...**

- Black hair is extremely fragile. A gentle touch is required to avoid unnecessary breakage and hair loss. Therefore, always use a wide toothcomb or pick when combing the hair. Avoid fine toothcombs as they snag and pull out curly/kinky hair. Invest in a quality brush; natural boar brushes are the best.

- Curly/kinky hair needs moisture, moisture, and more moisture! Consider this when purchasing hair care products. Avoid drying products such as hair spray, mousse, holding gels, etc. Opt for moisturizers, leave in conditioners, and styling lotions.

- All products are not created equal. Just because a product claims to be created for "curly hair" doesn't guarantee that it will be suitable for ethnic curly hair. Products created for Nicole Kidman's curly hair may not work for Angela Bassett's. Caucasian hair tends to distribute more sebum (oily secretion created by the sebaceous gland) than Black textured hair; therefore, Black hair requires more natural oils. Read, no, scrutinize the ingredient list. Look for natural oils and quality ingredients. Remember, the ingredients are listed in order of volume.

### **Common Mistakes Made When Caring for Ethnic Hair**

**Error #1 - Over shampooing** – Black hair should not be shampooed every day, or every other day for that matter. Instead, shampoo your child's hair every 7 days max! We recommend shampooing 2x a month. I know this may confuse those who shampoo daily; however, you must remember that Black hair needs oil, and because it distributes less sebum, frequent shampooing can dry out the hair

and scalp. Now this doesn't mean that you shouldn't cleanse or condition the hair in between your "no poo" days. Instead, opt for a conditioning rinse.

**Conditioning Rinse:** Rinse hair with warm water, apply Quenched conditioner, and rinse well. This will give you a clean start and provide added conditioning and moisture without stripping away protective oils.

We recommend our *Curly Q's Hydrating* shampoo and *Quenched* conditioner.

**Question:** *How often should I shampoo my African American/Multi-ethnic newborn/infant's hair?* Shampooing an infant's hair should be done on an as needed basis. Daily shampooing isn't needed nor is it recommended. If your infant has a substantial amount of hair, you may need to shampoo it more frequently (~ 2x week) than an infant without as much hair (~1x week). When washing the hair and the scalp of a baby or young child, be sure to go very slow and easy. Make sure that there are no tangles in the hair before washing it. It is recommended that you continue to use baby shampoo until the child is old enough to sit (reasonably) still during shampooing.

**Error #2 - Under conditioning** – Proper conditioning is one of the most important steps for healthy hair. Unfortunately, most do not take the time to adequately do so. I recommend using a deep conditioner on your child's once a month, especially during the winter season. Our *Quenched* conditioner works great.

**Question:** *When is the right time to incorporate conditioning into my child's hair regime?* As soon as the hair begins to shift from silky to curly/kinky (~ 1-2 years old) conditioning can commence! Doing so will help to keep your child's hair moist, soft and healthy. We recommend our *Curly Q's Quenched* conditioner.

**Error #3 - Using the wrong products** – As your child's hair texture begins to transition from silky straight baby hair, into curly/kinky hair – the need for quality children's hair care products will become necessary. A daily moisturizer (Curly Qs Moist Curls moisturizer) is critical! In fact, you should begin using a daily moisturizer as soon as the hair begins to change. Our *Moist Curls* moisturizer is a great choice. Adding a creamy styling lotion (Curly Q lotion) and a natural oil (e.g. our pure Avocado oil) won't be necessary until the child is ~ 2-3 years old. However, you must know that not all oil is good oil. One misconception that plagues African Americans concerning hair care is the use of grease. Grease (thick pomade-like product that usually contains mineral oil and/or petrolatum) is commonly used to moisturize dry hair and scalp. Do not use products that contain mineral oil or petrolatum. Both of these cheap oils clog pores, rob the hair's moisture and can retard hair growth. Natural oils are the best bet - they condition the hair as they penetrate the hair shaft. Jojoba and coconut oil are great conditioning oils. Shea butter is an excellent moisturizer. Avocado oil is rich in vitamins A, D, and E; potassium, and scalp soothing sulfur. Curls and Curly Q's products contain all of these!

#### **Error #4 - Combing, cutting, detangling, and other styling faux pas –**

VERY IMPORTANT - Avoid putting pressure on the soft spot on the top of the baby's head. Most babies and even some children up to the age of 4 or 5 are sensitive to any kind of pressure on their scalp.

To avoid pain, tears, and massive hair loss when combing out your child's curly/kinky hair, part the hair into four sections. Get a tight grip on the hair (not to hurt your child) and start combing at the bottom and work your way up to the top, section by section. If her hair is extremely thick and coarse, secure the combed out section with a ponytail holder to avoid further tangling. You should always use a moisturizer when combing her out hair, doing so will help to soften the hair, ease comb-ability, and prevent the hair from becoming matted. We recommend our *Curly Q's Moist Curls* moisturizer. Do not attempt to comb out dry hair, always comb through after it is wet and/or damp. NEVER USE WATER TO "WET" THE HAIR!

Girls and ponytails seem to go hand and hand. Here are a few tips to avoid pigtail disaster. Do not use rubber bands to secure her ponytails, instead use elastics and covered bands. Rubber bands (the type you find on newspapers or the little black rubber bands you can purchase in ethnic stores) can cause undue breakage and damage. Remember to ALWAYS remove the ponytail holders before bedtime. Make sure you braid (or twist) the hair completely...all the way to the ends. Exposing the ends to environmental elements will guarantee split ends. I recommend adding a coat of leave in conditioner to the ends before braiding for extra protection. Remember, the ends are the oldest and most fragile part of the hair. They require extra attention.

**Question:** *Baby's first hair cut, when is the right time?* Unless the child's hair is getting in their eyes or getting frayed on the ends, we recommend waiting until the 1-year mark before consulting a stylist.

I hope these tips will encourage you to invest in the health of your child's hair.

## Children Learn from Parents' Messages

By Michele Fried, Adoption STAR Founder and CEO

The adoptive mother of a Caucasian little boy sent me a note recently, "The moment for me that really brought home the idea of "adoption as a melting pot" was when I was at the agency picnic and overheard two big tough dads--both Caucasian-- discussing hair tips for their African American children! Just another way that adoption makes life more interesting and wonderful."

This mom continued to say that she often hears that her son looks like her husband. While that is a wonderful compliment, she stated that many people then add that "it was meant to be" because they look alike. "We usually chuckle and say he also has striking similarities to his birth mom, so he gets the best of both worlds." What a brave and beautiful response.

The messages children receive come from their parents; and from the way they see them respond to others. Many years ago when I was a very young adoptive mother, I attended a national adoption conference. In a very large auditorium the topic of transracial adoption came up and a woman in the back of the room raised her hand to share what she thought was a wonderful response to annoying onlookers. She said that she is a mother of children who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and she is often asked how could they all look so different from each other? Her response was, "I am a sloppy prostitute." She laughed and expected the crowd to giggle along with her, but instead she got the message loud and clear: "While you think you are retorting with a cute response, what message are you sending to your children?"

Certainly most of us would never think to respond in that manner. But sometimes it is the slightest comments that we may not be aware of that can send the wrong message. Often, without thinking, adoptive parents speak about wanting their *own* children before they adopted. They have their own children. They may not have been born to them, but they are truly their own. Sometimes, without realizing it, adoptive parents talk about a birth parent that *gave up* their child, when they mean to say, "Made an adoption plan" or "She chose your forever family." I tell waiting parents that we are not spouting political correctness with our words, but rather introducing terminology that helps our children feel wanted, safe, and respected.

Those of us who have biological and adopted children should be aware of the comments received by family members and friends. Often the non adopted children are told how much they look like mommy or daddy and of course, mom and dad get a kick out of that response. What does the adoptee hear? What does the adoptee think? He does not resemble his parents and he wonders does he belong?

We need to work hard to identify similarities between our adopted children and us. “You have beautiful big brown eyes like your daddy.” “You draw very well; mommy is good at drawing too.” “You have feet just like daddy.” “The minute Grandpa saw you he said you arrived with his nose!” Of course for very little children it’s also important to point out simply that you each have two eyes, a nose and a mouth. Uncomplicated statements like that also help provide connections. When you speak of differences, speak of them as positives not negatives. “You have a beautiful voice. I remember learning that your birth mother loved to sing.” “You have beautiful brown skin. You are so lucky.” When discussing your African American or Biracial child’s hair, remember not to speak negatively about his or her hair being hard to manage or a challenge for you. I know that this is a common issue especially for Caucasian parents, though I have also heard many African American parents refer to their children’s hair as “bad.” Your child’s hair is not bad. It is simply different. Not something you may be familiar with yet, but with practice and patience you will be. Then you will be able to point out the differences between yours and your child’s hair rather than one type of hair being better than the other.

The messages you send to your children help shape their self esteem and reactions to others. The way you respond to others also will affect your children. Though you may not have desired to become a teacher, you have become one if you are a parent. You have the awesome responsibility to guide your children, but also to educate others on the ways they respond to your family and your children.

If you are an adoptive parent with Adoption STAR then you are a STAR graduate of our educational classes. Most of you are pros and some of you may think you need a refresher class! Don’t worry! It is never too late to begin being more aware of the terminology you use and how you respond to questions from strangers, and issues that arise within your extended family and circle of friends.

Always be positive (even with question-asking strangers) and please remember, “Your children are listening.”

## Black Hair & Skin Care Resources

[http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/adoptionhair\\_skincare/](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/adoptionhair_skincare/)

Join this National yahoo group as a Public Forum set up for people who have adopted transracially. Get advice and tips from over 3,000 members on dealing with hair and skin care.

<http://beadsbraidsbeyond.blogspot.com/>

This is a great site for styling and care. This mother of two, showcases a variety of natural, children's hairstyles that cater to Biracial/African American hair care.

<http://www.chocolatehairvanillacare.com/>

Another mother who adopted her daughter domestically writes this great site. This blog features hair care instruction, product reviews, book reviews, and hot topics for natural hair care and transracial adoption. This is a helpful site for both hair care tips and adoption discussions.

<http://bellescurls.blogspot.com/>

Debbie writes this adorable blog, in honor of her beautiful biracial daughter, Bella. It includes product reviews and style pictures each year as Bella gets older. Debbie provides a long list of resources, where to shop, and slide shows of pictures.

A few other blogs that address hair for young girls and women:

<http://kandylandkurls.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.untrainedhairmom.com/>

<http://blackgirllonghair.com/>

<http://www.curlynikki.com/>