



HAIR CARE
FOR PARENTS
OF BLACK
CHILDREN



TAKING CARE OF KIDS AFRO HAIR: INTRODUCTION

This is a short online guide to help those of you struggling with you children's hair or for those learning to manage afro, curly or kinky hair for the first time.

CHAPTER 1: BABY HAIR 0 - 6MONTHS

When children with afro hair are babies the hair is sometimes soft, fine and wispy and you may find yourself washing the puke and paint etc out of their hair often. As they get older this hair will fall out and be replaced with the zigzag/curly hair that many people think is difficult to manage. Between the ages of 0 and 4 you may find it difficult to wash and or comb your child's hair as they wriggle to free themselves from you or complain about water in the their ears or stamp and splash water on you or just generally scream. This ordeal is normal for parents across the spectrum. You will therefore be relieved that black hair does not need to be washed that frequently as the scalp does not produce as much oil naturally, as other hair types. Once or twice a week should be more than enough. For bi - racial kids whose hair may be of a finer texture and produce more oil, this can be a little more often.

At around six months the hair your baby is born with will fall out. His hair will then grow back but may be different in texture or colour. For black children it is important to

take care of their scalp between birth and six months, so that when their hair does grow back it will be healthy.

- Wash the hair with shampoo once a week, using a gentle baby shampoo.
- Conditioner is very important for fragile afro hair. Try to condition the hair more often than shampooing. Always condition after you shampoo, but you can also just condition the hair without shampooing (co-washing). Use a baby comb to gently comb through the hair
- Air dry the hair, try not to use a blow dryer or heat appliance on the baby's hair and let it dry naturally.
- Apply a small amount of a natural oil to the scalp. A light oil like Olive Oil(virgin), Carrot Oil or Grapeseed Oil would be beneficial.
- Do not try to pull hair tight into clips or barrettes, these pull on the scalp. Try to leave it free if possible.
- If you need to use clips or barrettes use cloth covered ones. Only comb the hair when it is damp and use a spray bottle to wet the hair so that you can style it. I would however leave a six month olds hair free and not try to style it too much.

CHAPTER 2: SIX MONTHS TO FOUR YEARS

At this stage our baby/toddler/child will now have lost their baby hair which will have been replaced by curly afro hair. The baby hair may still be present on the ends of the hair and may start to cause some tangling. Around a year and a half depending on the child it may be necessary just to trim these last vestiges of their baby hair off, so as to avoid tangles, as this hair is a different texture to their new hair.

CHAPTER 3: DETANGLING

- The first thing you will need to do is detangle the hair. This may be easier at first when they have less hair but as the hair grows after they turn two, detangling properly is necessary.
- Divide the hair into four parts. If you can leave a part at the front or side for your child to help you this gives them a chance to play with their hair and get used to taking care of their hair later on. It also allows them to get to know and love their hair at an early age.
- Using a spray bottle of water, spray the first section with water and then apply conditioner to that section.
- Gently use your fingers to detangle this section.
- If the hair is long enough you can twist the hair or plait it loosely.
- Do this for each section.
- You will find this easier if the child's hair is in a protective style like canerows but if it has been left out detangling is essential as the hair can get knotted very easily.
- Use a wide tooth comb or your fingers to detangle
- Always detangle damp hair

- Use a conditioner to help with detangling. If you are not planning to wash the hair you can use a leave in conditioner to aid with detangling.

CHAPTER 4: WASHING HAIR - SHAMPOO

- When shampooing hair concentrate on the scalp, use the rule 'Shampoo roots, Condition ends' this just means you want to concentrate on the roots and scalp while you shampoo and hair while conditioning.
- Use a SLS free mild kids shampoo. If you can, use one designed for afro hair.
- Use a small amount of shampoo, to cleanse roots and scalp. Using too much shampoo can really dry your hair out. A little goes a long way.
- When you are washing the shampoo out it will run down the hair strands and cleanse them too.

1. Concentrate on the scalp

2. Use a mild SLS free afro children's shampoo

3. Always condition afterwards

CHAPTER 5: WASHING HAIR - CONDITIONER

- Condition the hair with an afro children's conditioner of your choice if you are able to find one or a mild children's conditioner.
- Leave in for 5 - 15 minutes while they have their bath
- Wash out
- Towel blot - try not to rub the hair over excessively
- Let the hair air dry if you have time
- Once the child turns around two use a diffuser on a hair dryer on a cool or very low setting to help dry the hair.
- I only use a hair dryer when I do not have time to air dry at night especially in the cold winter.

1. Use a mild children's conditioner

2. Towel blot, then air dry hair

3. Only blow dry on a low setting with a diffuser

CHAPTER 8: NIGHT TIME REGIMES

These can be used after washing hair as well

At night try to finger detangle your child's hair. If she is mixed race and her particular hair type is difficult to canerow and it will not stay for very long style her hair every two days. When she is older and has more hair this may be easier to do. Finger detangle with a leave in conditioner and plait or twist it into 4 sections. When she wakes in the morning I put her hair loosely in two scrunchies, but on my son's hair which is thicker and curlier I would have to plait it.

- 1. Moisturise hair with a leave in before bed.**
- 2. Seal in the moisture with an oil or butter. (olive oil or shea butter)**
- 3. Detangle and style (twist or plait) ready for the morning**

CHAPTER 7: SWIMMING WITH CHILDREN AND AFRO HAIR

Before your child goes to swim, massage in Grapeseed Oil or pure Shea Butter (barrier to chlorine). Once he is finished swimming use shampoo to wash his hair. Try to use one that contains citric acid or phytic acid that will remove the chlorine.

- If this is not a moisturising shampoo, you may need to wash again with a mild moisturising shampoo. It is probably not a good use to use adult swim shampoos on children they can be quite harsh on young developing scalps and especially on fragile afro hair.

Use a conditioner and try to get him to leave this on for 5 -15minutes. If you can wash the hair when you get home so you can slowly go through all these steps.

Also remember to wash and lotion the child skin carefully as chlorine can be damaging for skin too and make it excessively dry.

- 1. Prepare the hair before swimming**
- 2. Use a kids shampoo with phytic acid or citric acid to remove the chlorine**
- 3. Finish up with a moisturising shampoo and conditioner**

CHAPTER 8: NITS OR LICE (OH THE FUN)

This was a hard one, it is actually harder for the lice found in Europe to infest afro hair. That being said braiding, canerowing and plaiting the hair can make it more difficult for the lice to get into the hair. However once it has gotten into the hair you may have to use medicated shampoo to kill them and then was with a moisturising shampoo and conditioner.

Instead of a medicated shampoo use a mixture of tea tree and jamaican black castor oil. You can spray the hair and scalp with tea tree water and then smoothen the hair strands in Jamaican Black Castor Oil. This smoothers the lice and should kill them.

1. Wash with children's medicated lice treatment or other natural lice treatment
2. Follow up with a kids moisturising shampoo and conditioner

Chapter: Styling

I haven't said a lot about styling as that can depend on individual hair. My daughter and son require two different styling regimes which I will have to go into in another post. Don't be afraid to leave your child's hair out in a scrunchy or twist it instead of plaiting. Just remember gentle detangling and moisture, moisture, moisture!

Chapter 9: Products

Clifornia Baby

Shescentit

Any natural shea butter formula

Ingredients to avoid