

### Edges Preservation

- I need to be intentional, focused and committed to ensuring I adopt the right hair practices
- I will not be able to do every type of protective styling e.g. wigs, Ghana weaving, excessively intricate or manipulated styles
- I have to avoid being a product junkie; most times less is more
- I have to find staples that are healthy for my hair, build a specific routine that works for me and stick to it. This came mostly through trial and error
- Initially I had to be very regimental with my routine once improvements came, I could be bit more flexible and afford off days e.g. scalp massages
- I sort medical help; Minoxidil

For those who may be interested in finding out about Minoxidil contact your GP or a reputable hair loss expert Minoxidil initially formulated as an antihypertensive vasodilator. Now widely used topically for treatments of hair loss in both male and female.

Minoxidil mechanism of action is not fully understood however theoretically it widens blood vessels and opening potassium channels means it allows more oxygen, blood and nutrients to the follicles when applied topically.

A minimum of 4-6 months is needed to see results. Ongoing use is also mostly needed depending on the level of damage or extent of affected area.

Note that role/effect of minoxidil will become diminished if bad hair practices persists.

### Scalp care

- Identify the root cause; seek medical help for diagnosis and treatment where applicable
- Classify the symptoms; itchy, scaling, dandruff, psoriasis etc as this will enable you
- figure out how best to manage or treat flare ups
- Sensitivities to products played a large part in my scalp issues. I can't use certain products e.g. styling gels, large quantities of leave in conditioners.
- Quantity of product application; less is more. Focus area of hair products; aiming more for hair follicles less on my scalp. Unless I am doing a hot oil treatment or clay mask
- I have found that my scalp thrives better in hot climates and where there is 'soft' water
- Ayurvedic powders for scalp cleansing as I have found this work well on my scalp. I use Shikakai, a traditional Ayurvedic ingredient, is a mild cleanser for hair that has a naturally low pH and also cleans hair and scalp without stripping the natural oils.
- My scalp is unique to me and I have to learn at times through trial and error what makes it thrive. For example, I have stopped using expressions for hair styling as I discovered it irritates my scalp (apparently some people get this also due to the chemicals used to treat it). I chose to avoid it generally as I can't be asked to treat it with ACV (a method recommended to reduce the irritant effect).
- I have since discovered that my scalp tolerates wool/yarn better and my hair strands also stay moisturised in it so currently my go to if I want to add length to the tips of my hair.

## Relaxers messed up my scalp theory (this is Funmi's own theory I must stress this)

- If you have problems with flaky, itchy, dry scalp, eczema, fungi or bacteria on your scalp, it is likely that your scalp and hair are too alkali. Usually, this means that you are using a product that has a high pH above 7, and it is stripping away your naturally acidic sebum that fights bacteria. Lower pH shampoos may also cause less frizzing and breakage. This is why a shampoo with a pH of 6 or 7 should be used.
- Scalp is at its healthiest when sebum pH is low (acidic), hence why products like Apple cider vinegar probably help.
- My theory is that my scalp over time through years of repeated relaxing has been stripped consistently of its acidic basis or nature and as a result made it more alkali in nature and prone to dryness and flaking.

### Mode of action of Relaxers –

Relaxers are strong enough to break the disulfide bonds in hair fibres and consequently alter the structure of the curl pattern. This because of their typically high pH (alkali). In chemistry, pH is a numeric scale used to state how acidic or basic a substance is. If it has a low pH, it is more acidic and if the pH is high, it is more basic (alkali). Hair relaxers are basic, with their pH ranging from 9 to 14 to ensure that they are strong enough to change the hair structure.

There are different types of hair relaxers available of varying strengths and made up of different chemicals. Thio (short for ammonium thioglycolate) relaxers are much thicker in consistency than other relaxers, which makes them easier to apply. They have a pH value of at least 10 to ensure that enough of the disulfide bonds have broken. The relaxer is then rinsed out and a neutraliser used to bring the hair back to its original pH value of 4.5 – 5.5. Thio relaxers slowly break down the bonds in the hair's proteins in order to straighten it.

However, lye relaxers work in a slightly different way. In this process, lye is the active ingredient. Lye is a mixture of sodium hydroxide, water, petroleum jelly, mineral oil and emulsifiers. This relaxer is absorbed by the hair's proteins and weakens the bonds rather than breaking them. The curls are then loosened as the hair fibre swells open. However, the amount of lye in the relaxer can vary, so weaker products can minimise the extent of damage to the scalp. Lye relaxers typically have a pH between 12 and 14 and do not require a special neutralising step, unlike thiol relaxers.

There is a school of thought on using lower pH shampoos/conditioners etc if scalp is prone to fungal problems like dandruff and itchy as it could be a result of the scalp being to alkali etc.

### Final thoughts

With regards to your edges, prevention is better than cure. Please desist from those practices we know can cause damage. I do not like to demonise any hair style, but we have abused braids, cornrows, weaves etc. And now we are seeing issues with wigs so please be mindful. Some people can use wigs with no issues but if your edges are already damaged then it can aggregate. And if your hair is already compromised consider seeking help.