Will dye damage my hair and turn it prematurely gray? [1]

Alice,

My parents finally let me lighten my hair to blond a month before I turned fourteen. Since then, I've changed it several times, and now my parents are telling me I'm going to get gray hair earlier because of the chemicals, and that I'm going to really mess up my hair if I keep changing the color. Is all that really true?

?The Leading Buyer of Hair Chemicals

Answer

Dear The Leading Buyer of Hair Chemicals,

Changing hair color is one way people express themselves, or the various sides of themselves... whether it's lighter, darker, highlighted, natural, or "day-glo."

There's little study-based evidence of anyone getting gray hair from dyeing his or her hair over and over again. However, some studies have suggested that heavy use of hair dye might cause cancer [2] in some people (both in people who are dyeing their hair, and in colorists whose livelihood depends upon providing the coloring process). The connection to cancer needs more research, but it's enough of a possibility that scientists think it's a good idea to limit exposure to these products. The thinking is that more exposure over a lifetime will put one at a greater risk of potential problems. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [3], suspected cancer causing compounds are found in temporary, semi-permanent, and permanent dyes.

If you do decide to dye:

- Follow the package directions to the letter.
- To avoid allergic reactions, always follow the package directions for a "patch test" before using the dye on your hair (usually you're told just to dab a bit of dye behind your ear and leave it there without washing for a couple of days; if you don't develop a rash, itching, redness, or other irritation, you're probably not allergic or sensitive to the dye).
- Wear gloves while handling the dye.
- Leave the dye on your hair or head for no longer than absolutely necessary according to the instructions.
- Rinse your hair and head with lots of water after dyeing, till the water runs clear in the shower or sink.
- Don't mix different dye products together.
- Avoid applying hair dye to eyebrows or eyelashes? if it gets into your eyes, it can result in blindness.

If you're noticing that your hair seems damaged, you may want to take a break from dye for a little while. You may also consider visiting a professional hair stylist who can help determine what type of hair dye would work best for you.

Here's to good health and a lovely head of hair!

Alice!
Category: General Health [4]
Hair [5]

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