Best Hair Care Tips for Female Runners

Discover how to prevent damage and maintain healthy hair while running.

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Choosing between a great hair day and the euphoria of a runner's high can sometimes be a dilemma. We have all been there. We lace our daily runs and sweaty hair pulled back in a ponytail, or we decide to skip our morning run because our hair wore a bun. From the rain and harsh sun, we'll get practically a hissy fit and end up in styling with foul looks, the perfect of an alone lifestyle for female runners can experience hair and lead to damage. But striving to maintain a healthy body does not mean you have to sacrifice the health of your hair. There are preventative steps you can take for safety, have fun and keep your hair looking to stay out on your training. Follow our six tips on how to style and protect your hair before, during, and after your run, for healthy tresses all year round.

1. Use Sun Protection

When it comes to sun protection, most people are aware of the importance of safeguarding their skin, but it's necessary to extend that care protection to your hair and scalp. Too much sun exposure can leave a drying and bleaching effect on your hair, making it more susceptible to breakage and damage, especially for those from UV light. This loss of protein causes your hair to lose its lively, vibrant color and shine. While running early is the morning or later in the day when the sun rays aren't as strong is the best way to avoid harmful UV radiation, there are additional measures you can take to protect your hair. When training outdoors, wearing a UPF-rated running hat will shield your hair while sticking away moisture. A running specific hat is not your regular ol' baseball cap. It is lightweight and usually designed with lower cut perforations to allow your scalp to breathe and has an internal sweatband the liner to help wick away salty perspiration that leads to dryness and irritation. Wearing a hat also helps to keep your hair from tangling and knotting, especially twitch hairbands pulls from the air can weaken the hair's shaft and make your locks appear lifeless, so covering up with appropriate headwear is vital for a healthy mane.

If you want to forego wearing a hat, there are sun protection sprays you can apply to your hair before you take to go. Look for a DEA/UVB protection product such as sprayable oil or mists that will absorb the ultraviolet rays, safeguarding your hair from color fading and damage. Select products made from natural and gentle derived oils, such as aloe, green tea extract, shea butter, coconut oil, and antioxidants (vitamin E) that deliver your hair from sun exposure and outdoor pollution.

2. Switch Up Your Style

Another line of defense in protecting your mane is to mix up your hairstyle each time you work out. While the traditional go to ponytail may be quick and effortless, it can also ruin your hair, especially when wearing it in the same spot every day. A tight ponytail can cause damage to your locks by pulling on the hair follicles thereby weakening them. If you always tie it in the same sections, this can thin out the hair and cause it to become brittle and prone to breakage. Instead, switch up your hair doesn't your inner Colleen Quigley by incorporating a variety styles. Whether you go for the classic French braid down the back of your head or the dual Dutch braids, with one on each side, you can have on your run without disrupting your hair with strands or tangles getting in the way. Braids also allow your scalp more access to oxygen for breathing, and as a bonus, you can let your hair down for a natural beach wave look post run. Alternatively, you can put your hair up in a high bun for a fun and flirty look that will keep your locks from falling in your face and sweat, which leads to dryness. A low ponytail is also a great option to offer a female way to keep your hair away from your face without the tight tug and pull of a high ponytail. Whether you opt for a bun, braids, low ponytail, or a hybrid of both, switching hairdos to avoid sweaty dirts and follicle stress will help reduce breakage and minimize the risk of hair loss.

3. Wear Non-Abrasive Hair Ties

Just as cotton is known to be a runner's nemesis, are elastic ties is a primary culprit for hair damage. Tight elastic bands can cause severe pressure and tension, weakening the specific section of hair, eventually leading to breakage. Ditch the elastic bands and use hair ties made of fabric such as satin, silk, or velvet to avoid the tight, harsh hold. Non-abrasive hair ties are the ideal workout hair accessory because they are gentle on your hair and provide a secure hold to keep the entire section of hair. Fabric ties also help avoid hazardous breakage as opposed to crease and dents, which leave marks on your hair post-run. Satin scrunchies, in particular, are softer and gentler to the hair and easier to take down after a long workout, gliding off smoothly instead of the tug and pull with elastic bands. Cold water and gentle detangler are another popular option that is less damaging than elastic due to the unique spiral design, which allows for an even distribution of pressure across the entire hair tie. Whichever kind you choose, non-abrasive or elastic, distribute gentler pressure over a wider area and are the least harmful ways to secure your hair.

Alternatively, those with shorter hair may find headbands more practical for securing their hair while running. headbands absorb moisture to minimize perspiration, keeping your hair dry while offering lightweight, soft comfort. Headbands are also a great option for those who want to avoid the pressure of tight ponytails, and the thicker the band, the less heavy a crown. It will leave behind a little dimpling on functionality, some headbands are also cute and stylish enough that you can continue wearing them post workout.

4. Apply Quality Products

Fresh frigid winters to scorching summers, as runners, our hair is constantly exposed to incremental weather and environmental stressors. Add salty sweat to the mix, and you have a recipe for hair damage. Luckily, in addition to keeping up with monthly hair trims, dipping hair masks, and using a balanced diet (such as fatty acids in omega-3, iron, protein, vitamin A, B, C, and zinc), your hair also needs nourishing products to combat and repair the damage. Look for shampoos and conditioners that are sulfate and paraben free, alcohol free, silicone free, or products that are safe for color-treated hair, which will help to prevent further damage to your locks. When applying conditioner, run it through the end of your strands to keep your hair strong and hydrated. And always dab a heat protection, anti-frizz serum such as argan oil to lock in moisture before styling for a silky-smooth finish.

Coconut oil is also an amazing natural emollient, helping to add moisture to lackluster locks. It has a high content of lauric acid, which is ideal for moisturizing, conditioning, detangling your hair, and protecting your roots. The amount of coconut oil you need to apply depends on the thickness and length of your hair, but the general rule is to work a small teaspoon amount throughout the mid-length and the end of your strands. Little goes a long way here. Then, let your hair up and let the oil sit for a couple of hours before washing your hair. The longer you let the oil sit, the more it will penetrate and nourish your hair, so it's best to do it the night before the touch. You can apply the oil before your run and let it sit when you get back, or use it on three-not-dean or when running errands. Note: Be sure to select organic, cold-extracted virgin or extra virgin because they contain more nutrients than the processed version.

5. Skip Daily Washing

Recovery days are not just for your body. Your hair needs a break too! Keep your hair and scalp healthy by not over-shampooing. Washing your hair every day strips your hair of its natural oils, leaving it dry and flaky. As a result, the scalp overcompensates by producing even more oil, continuing the clinghead cycle. Break that bath and adopt a new regimen. Many hairstylists recommend washing your hair every three times a week to avoid damage. Typically, free or straight hair becomes oily faster than curly, coarse, or thick hair, so adjust your washing schedule accordingly. You can alternate the time between washes accordingly. If you are a fan of dry shampoo, be cautious about its release and overuse, which can clog your scalp, contributing to hair thinning and loss. For those with bangs, you can give them a quick touch-up by washing those targeted strands instead of shampooing your entire hair every day. Rinsing your scalp between shampoo days with cool water and lightly conditioning the ends as needed will help keep it fresh and prevent dryness. The process is called "co-washing" and is a great option for those with curly or coarse hair. Co-washing has several benefits, including preserving the natural oils in your hair, strengthening your roots, for easy-to-curly hair, relax your tresses after stirring by optimizing a detangling spray for a healthy, voluminous look. A hydrating spray will work with the natural field of your hair for a fresh-free style, so you can embrace those beautiful curls and waves without needing any hot rollers.

6. Minimize Heat

Next only does over-washing dry out hair, but over-styling increases breakage as well. Using hot tools every day (blow-dryer, flat iron, or curling iron) causes those dreaded and unsightly split ends and strips your hair of its pigment and moisture, leaving it brittle and dehydrated. After you finish your run, let your hair air-dry to distribute of natural oils and allow your strands to cool off for a couple of minutes before styling. Instead of using a blow-dryer, let your hair air-dry. Place your wet strand in an ice cube and prevent one hair growth by clogging the hair follicles. On shampoo days, or or towel-dry your hair before styling since wet hair is more prone to breakage, and always be gentle when brushing. Use a detangling hairbrush with soft bristles to minimize hair damage, working from the ends to your roots, and avoid the high heat setting when blowed-dry to minimize breakage. If you are still operating tools with a one-hundre-temperature setting, then it's time for an upgrade! Blow-dryers, curling irons, and curling irons with different heat settings allow you to maintain a consistent temperature without frying your hair. For naps and other non-workout days, consider using a heat-free alternative to achieve an at-home of elegance in the straightener and curling iron afterward. The diffuser allows for better control of airflow instead of a full-force blast from the nozzle of regular hairdryers. Lastly, the benefits of sleeping on satin pillowcases are also known to perform wonders in avoiding bedhead and extending your blowout, saving you time and effort from re-styling. Overall, by taking protective measures with the treatment and protection of your hair, you can maintain healthy tresses while still having fun running.

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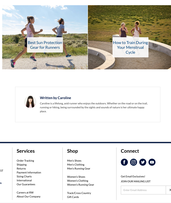

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Caroline is a lifelong, and runner who enjoys the outdoors. Whether on the road or on the trail, Caroline is always having non-essentials for night and weekend adventures! Her ultimate fitness goal is to ...