

The Care and Keeping of Natural African American Hair



Transitioning and Understanding
Natural Hair made easy

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Introduction

Purpose of This Manual

For generations, African American females have been accustomed to putting a perm on their hair to get rid of their naturally kinky hair texture and achieve the socially acceptable hair style known as straight and manageable. Recently, everyone has become more aware of the possible health problems perms can cause and decided to trade in perms for a more carefree, natural hairstyle. It is black woman's way of saying that their hair doesn't have to be long and straight to be beautiful and acceptable. However, any black woman that has attempted to transition and maintain a natural hairstyle knows that it is not always as carefree as it may seem. A lot of time, effort and sometimes tears goes into making natural hair look the way we want it to. Since decades were spent using the perm and a hot comb to achieve straight hair, a lot of african americans don't have a lot of knowledge when it comes to the care and keeping of natural hair which leads to resorting back to perms.

What is in This Manual?

The Care and Keeping of African American Natural Hair is made simple with the tips and guidelines that are provided in this instruction manual. The Manual contains a list of needed materials, steps on transitioning from relaxed hair to natural hair, advice to make the journey smoother, possible hairstyles and extra tips. This instruction manual was written with beginners in mind. I will guide you through every step, making this instruction manual a great tool for beginning your natural hair journey.

How this Manual should be used

An important step to understanding how to care for natural hair is understanding that different things work for different people. This instruction manual is meant to guide the reader in the right direction, you must try different products and processes to discover which one works best for you and this instruction manual will cover more than one way to achieve certain results.

Materials

How Materials Will be Explained

Typically, instruction manuals contain one list for materials but there will be different processes explained throughout this manual so for the purpose of making this instruction manual easy to understand, I will create a materials list for each new process.

Transitioning

1. Time
2. Scissors

Hair type and Porosity

1. Water
2. Strand of your natural hair

Washing Natural Hair

1. Shampoo
2. Conditioner
3. T-Shirt
4. Detangling Comb

Styling (Depends on style, comb needed for all)

Twist out

1. Rubber bands
2. Moisturizer
3. Water in a spray bottle

Straight Natural Hair

1. Flat Iron

2. Heat protectant
3. Coconut oil
4. Blow Dryer

Process

Transitioning

Step 1: Wait. Transitioning usually begins 6-8 weeks after your most recent perm when you begin to have new growth at your roots. New growth is where your hair has grown in its natural state since the last perm, it will usually appear as kinky or curly depending on the texture of your hair. Here is a visual representation:

Step 2: Cut. Eventually, your hair will begin to break off at the point where the relaxed hair and natural hair meet so you will have to cut the relaxed hair off to keep your natural hair healthy. This step is up to you because you can allow your natural hair to grow a little bit before you cut the relaxed hair off. At this point you have completed the hair transition.

Hair Type and Porosity

Completion of this process is important for you to be able to learn which products work for your hair and how to properly keep it moisturized.

Step 1: Porosity. For this step you only need 1 or 2 strands of your natural hair and a bowl of water. Put a strand of hair in the water, and if your hair sinks to the bottom of the bowl then your hair has a high level of porosity, meaning that your hair absorbs and loses moisture easily. If your hair stays at the top of the water then you have a low level of porosity, meaning that your hair is not easily moisturized because you have closed hair cuticles. If your hair floats at the halfway point of the water (not at the top or bottom but in the middle) then you have a medium level of porosity. This is the ideal level because your hair is easily moisturized and retains moisture well.

Step 2: Hair type: For this step you need a strand of your natural hair in a bowl of water again. African Americans usually have a hair type that ranges from 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B to 4C. 3B and 3C are both more of a loose curl and it is typically seen in bi-racial people, 4A and 4B are both more of a tighter curl while 4C is the kinkiest hair texture, it usually looks like an afro. 4A-4C is the most common hair type in African Americans.

Washing Natural Hair

Washing natural hair is a lot like washing relaxed hair but it is a little different.

Step 1: Wet your hair and use a small amount of shampoo. With natural hair, shampoo is almost considered an enemy, it will dry your hair out because it strips your hair of its natural oils. For this reason, you are not required to use shampoo every time you wash your hair. Let's say you wash your hair every 2 weeks, then it is ideal that you use shampoo once a month at most. Otherwise skip to step 2.

Step 2: After rinsing the shampoo out of your hair, you will apply a generous amount of conditioner to your hair. Conditioner is the best friend of natural hair because it allows the hair to maintain its moisture.

Step 3: Normally, people use a towel to dry their hair after washing it but the material of a towel can be a little too rough for natural hair causing the hair to be pulled. It is best to use a cotton t-shirt to dry natural hair or let it air dry.

Step 4: Detangling comb. (See the image below for an example) This step is pretty self explanatory, you need to use a wide tooth comb to comb your hair from the roots to the ends. Repeat this process as your hair dries, especially if you have a 4A-4C hair type because kinky hair can tangle quickly.



Styling

Twist out- A twist out is the easiest and quickest way to achieve defined curls.

Step 1: Natural hair is easier to manage when it is a little wet so begin by spraying water on your hair to dampen it but do not drench your hair in water, it should not be dripping wet.

Step 2: Use a wide tooth comb to section and detangle your hair from the roots to the ends.

Step 3: Apply moisturizer (if needed) to each section of the hair and use a wide tooth comb to make sure that it is evenly distributed throughout the hair.

Step 4: Take small sections of your hair and twist or braid each section from the root to the end and apply a rubber band at the end. Allow your hair to stay braided while you sleep at night.

Step 5: After your hair has been braided for the desired amount of time, take out the rubber bands and undo every braid. At this point you should have defined curls and you can style the hair as desired.

Straight natural hair- It is possible to obtain straight hair without a perm.

Step 1: Spray heat protectant on hair and use a wide tooth comb to detangle the hair and distribute the heat protectant evenly throughout the hair.



Step 2: Set your flat iron to a safe temperature which is around 302°F for natural hair.

Step 3: Use the blow dryer to straighten your hair first in order to make the process easier and faster.

Step 4: Separate the hair into 4 different sections and focus on one section at a time.

Step 5: Take a small section of hair and put a small amount of coconut oil on the hair (this will allow your hair to stay moisturized and keep it from having a dull look), run your comb through the section.

Step 6: Lastly, while flat ironing your hair, allow your comb to chase the flat iron so you can be sure that each strand is straight, this will also keep you from needing to pass the flat iron over your hair multiple times.

Conclusion

Congratulations, now you know how to take care of your beautiful natural hair. Natural hair is a great way to show off your culture and natural beauty because it is very diverse. Natural hair may seem difficult to maintain in the beginning but if you stick with the process, you will see how amazing your natural hair really is. The main thing to

remember is to keep your hair moisturized, minimize the amount of heat you use on it and as long as your body is healthy, your hair will be too. I hope that you enjoyed this manual and were able to learn a lot from it. Keep this manual as a good reference or pass it on to a friend so they can begin their journey as well.