



Dear Paula,

How often should hair be washed and conditioned? I have always washed every day, but have heard recently from a few friends and cosmetologists that it is better to go 3-4 days between washings. I have fine, shoulder-length hair and recently got highlights. If it is better to wash less frequently, what would I do about "bedhead," especially undesired poofiness around the crown and part?

Christine, via email

Dear Christine,

There is no question that daily shampooing and then styling hair with blow dryers and flat irons are damaging and hard on hair. The less often you do those things the better off your hair will be. But that rule isn't hard and fast because different hair and scalp types have different needs to look beautiful. What good is waiting three or four days to wash your hair if your hair looks terrible after the second day? For example, if you have an oily scalp you may need to shampoo daily so your hair doesn't look matted and slick. Those with dry hair and scalp can get away with far less frequent washings but if you exercise and perspire excessively that could require more frequent shampooing.

If you have very short hair it may not be necessary to apply a conditioner, shorter hair is generally healthier because the damaged length is always being cut off. But for those who like the feel of conditioner on their hair there is no problem so condition away. For longer or dyed hair, whenever you wash your hair you need to apply conditioner (just on the length of hair not at the root so you don't weight down your hair style) so it will feel like normal again (it doesn't repair anything, but conditioner can make hair feel repaired temporarily).

Fine hair can look flat after just one day without shampooing so that is something you are going to have to determine what works best for you. As long as



you keep your hair shorter daily or every other day shampooing should be fine as long as you are careful about not overstyling your hair and using the appropriate styling products (nothing too heavy or firm).

If you decide to shampoo less often, there are a couple of ways to combat bedhead and poofy parts on the in between days when you don't shampoo. You can use a flatiron on dry hair to smooth the trouble spots, coaxing them into the direction you want your hair to go and then follow with a lightweight styling cream or spray gel. Another option is to either mist hair with enough water so that it can be re-styled or simply rinse your hair in the shower and then style it as usual. Generally speaking, it is best to manipulate hair as little as possible so if either method works for you, be gentle and don't force your hair into doing something it doesn't want to do.