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Just Your Type: *Haircuts & Haircolor for Curly Hair*

By Elie Gerdak, Elie.Elle Salon

The methods for cutting and coloring curly hair are really very different from other types of hair! Therefore, it requires different haircare. Many people think curly hair is strong. In fact, the spiral pattern of the curly hair cuticle actually makes it weak and quite vulnerable. If you have curly hair, it is important that you see a hairstylist that has curly hair experience and expertise. Otherwise, you will not get the proper haircut, haircolor or hairstyle that you truly desire.

Curly Hair Challenges

The most common curly hair challenges I have seen include frizziness, bulkiness, lack of style, undefined curls and dull haircolor. Curly hair is very fragile and improper care can lead to brittle hair. Over processed hair, improper product use, poor diet and other conditions can cause lackluster curls. Therefore re-hydrating curly hair to restore its natural oils and bounce is very important. You may have difficulty finding a “professional” look for your work life or you may be frustrated because you feel that no one really understands your hair. Many times hairstylists suggest thinning or razoring techniques that can contribute to the pyramid affect, which agitates your hair. As curly hair women, you probably have closets full of haircare products that don’t work. You need to consult with a professional hair designer to carefully select the best products for curly hair. Some products will smother the hair in an effort to “tame” it. High silicon and high alcohol content products will have short-term results, but in the long run these will cause your curly hair to easily become dry, frizzy and break.

The Best Haircutting Technique & Styles for Your Curly Hair

Take the extra time to consult with your hair designer before you start your next haircut. There are two to three different types of curls on each naturally curly head, which is why a standard haircut will not work. The most effective haircutting techniques for curly hair are called “Carving” or “Slicing”. Ouidad, ‘the Queen of Curl’ from New York and a leading curly hair expert in the professional beauty industry, has developed these special haircutting techniques. Ouidad has done extensive research on curly hair and its characteristics. Her haircutting methodology is so unique, that it has been awarded a US Trademark.

The “Carving” haircutting process is used most frequently on fine hair, encouraging a large curl pattern as opposed to a small mass of curls. The “Slicing” haircutting process involves taking one section of the hair at a time by slicing the hair lightly with the wave of the curl, so that the curls will cup gracefully into each other, instead of stacking up on top of each other. Any expert Ouidad trained curly hair designer such as myself, can address the multiple textures that exist with our clients who have curly hair. A certified hairstylist will see and feel your different textures and know when to carve and when to slice in order to achieve the best curl definition for your hair. These techniques, combined with the correct professional product applications, will give you beautiful looking curls.

You may think that longer curly hairstyles are easier to maintain, but shorter styles are typically easier to manage. The weight of your hair will affect your hairstyle. The coarseness or fineness of the hair shaft, facial structure and age are also factors in determining an easy and flattering hairstyle. A trained curly hair stylist can determine a style that works best on you, one that is close to the natural curl pattern of your hair. Short or long, an expert curly haircut can make all the difference in maintaining your total image and hairstyle. The most stylish hair is not necessarily the easiest to maintain. For example, curls worn by celebrities like Jennifer Lopez and Nicole Kidman may look sexy and “tousled” by their defined curls but these styles are often “set” with rollers to enhance their natural curls. However, for everyday wear, these styles can take some practice.

If you want a formal updo or a specialty hair design for an event such as a wedding, set your hair in rollers to soften and loosen your curls. By doing this you will create beautiful height with added glamour. For a more romantic and natural look, condition your hair using the right products and techniques to create a head full of lustrous, bouncy and sexy curls. You can frame your face with several tendrils fashioned by using a curling iron, straightening iron or hairpins. Make several tousled twists and you will have a very modern unstructured look. To create a finished appearance, don’t forget to use a professional climate control and a shine product that resists the effects of humidity.

Haircolor For Your Curls

Coloring hair that is dry or damaged by overprocessing is difficult, so I highly recommend that you get a professional deep conditioning treatment one week before you get your hair colored. The porousness of curly hair is also challenging, when considering haircolor.

Methodically coloring curly hair in layers creates texture within the texture. Another good haircolor method for curls is glossing, which seals and softens the rough cuticle of curly hair. If you want more exciting and dramatic results, I recommend that you professional dye your hair with rich colors, which will create depth due to the texture of your curls. Blending two hair colors on a darker base looks very enticing and luxurious on curly hair. For example, red and golden blonde strands on a brunette base are very attractive. There are many beautiful haircolor and multi-level highlighting techniques today that look wonderful in curly hair. A great benefit of having curly hair is that you can go longer without needing a touchup because your roots are much less revealing. Having professional haircolor services every 6 to 8 weeks is perfectly fine. Ask your professional hair designer to offer you several different options. Don't be afraid to experiment with new haircolor techniques several times per year.

Maintaining Your Curls

To keep your curls healthy, you will need a structured haircare maintenance program with a professional product system. Deep hair conditioning treatments should be applied once a week at home or in the salon. Special curly hair professional products should be used for weekly moisturizing and conditioning to maintain a beautiful shine, luster and bounce. Do not use any volumizing or texturizing shampoo. Curls thrive from their own pure definition, not volume. They already have natural body. I recommend you get a haircut at least once every 2 to 3 months if your hair is shoulder length or longer and no more than every 6 to 8 weeks, if you have short hair.

There are many great professional hairstyling products available specifically for people with curly hair. I recommend Ouidad Clear Shampoo, which removes hairstyling product buildup or residue from gels, mousses and hairsprays. This product is gentle enough for curly hair that has been color treated. Ouidad Curl Quencher Shampoo and Conditioner revives dry, dehydrated and damaged hair by filling in areas of damage and breakage, making unruly hair easier to detangle and manage. Super Rich from Bumble and bumble Haircare is a special detangling conditioner that softens your curls to restore their natural spring. Deep Treatment by Bumble and bumble, can be used once a week to repair hair and provide necessary moisture control. Botanical Boost is a leave-in conditioner that seals in moisture and nourishes with vitamins and aloe vera. This conditioning product has great versatility, since it can be used anytime on either wet or dry hair.

Hairstyling and finishing products such as Bumble and bumble's Shine, will help to prevent frizz and reduce stiffness. Climate Control protects curls from humidity by hydrating each strand, and Tress F/X is a terrific sculpting gel that will help define your curls without weighing them down. Most hairbrushes will destroy curls by tearing the strands. The best hairstyling tools to use on curly hair include: a wide-toothed comb and a diffuser. Ask your professional hair designer to prescribe the proper shampoos, conditioners, sprays and styling tools for professional maintenance of your hair between salon visits.

Men's Curly Hair

Professional haircutting techniques for men with curly hair are very similar to women with short curly hair. Men should not cover up or mask their curls. Celebrities such as Justin Timberlake and Hayden Christensen have made curls fashionably sexy and mainstream. There are many professional and stylish haircuts available today for men with curly hair – including long, medium, short or the newly popular haircut that is longer on top and shorter on the sides and in the back. It is important that your hairstylist understands your curl patterns and how they will relate to the overall hairstyle and image that you desire.

Properly Trained Curly Hair Specialists

At Elie.Elle, all of our hairstylists have significant curly hair experience as well as plenty of advanced education while being very strong in the basic foundations of hairstyling for all hair types. They perfect their haircuts and hairstyles to stay current on the latest hair design trends, through monthly in-salon and off-site educational programs. They also work with each other to achieve the latest celebrity and innovative styles based on classic cuts. Once hairstylists at my salon reach a high level of curl competence, they are trained in the Ouidad methodology for curly hair. They train at both my salon and at Ouidad's Salon in New York City. In order to receive curly hair certification, they must pass an examination by Ouidad herself and participate in ongoing continued Ouidad education.

I absolutely love curly hair! I specialize in curly hair, haircolor and updo artistry. Take the time to explore curly hair experts in your city who have invested the extra time to experience all of the different curly haircutting, hairstyling and haircoloring techniques. Put your curly hair and trust in their talented hands and you will always look like a celebrity!

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EDITORIAL NOTE: Elie Gerdak is the owner of Elie.Elle Salon located in Tyson Corner Centre in McLean, Virginia. Elie is a Ouidad Certified Master Hairstylist, personally trained by Ouidad herself, in New York. Both Allure and InStyle Magazines have recently recognized Elie Gerdak as a Ouidad 'Curly Hair Expert'. He has been featured on Fox TV and in numerous consumer and professional beauty trade magazines for his expertise in curly hair designs, updos and creative haircolor techniques. He has been in the beauty industry for many years, working along Vidal Sassoon. Elie is one of the most dynamic superstar hairstylists on the East Coast, providing VIP service to a diverse clientele, including many local and national celebrities.

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