Patient Hair Care

If your child is in the hospital for an extended period of time, it is important to help them care for their hair. Washing, conditioning and using moisturizer will help their hair stay healthy so it does not get too dry and break off. Washing hair lets moisture into the scalp and removes dirt and residue. According to the Ohio Board of Cosmetology, your child’s hair should be washed at least once a week.

Washing

When washing your child’s hair, try to use sulfate-free and alcohol-free products to avoid drying out the hair. How your child’s hair is washed depends on their hair type and needs. More than one wash may be needed if hair has any of these:

- surgical soap
- blood
- EEG paste
- Betadine®

How to wash your child’s hair
1. Wet hair with warm water.
2. Apply shampoo to wet hair.
3. Gently massage shampoo through hair, running fingers from the scalp to the ends.
4. Repeat washes as needed.
5. Rinse shampoo completely from hair with warm water.

Detangling

Your child’s hair may need to have knots removed (detangled) before it can be washed. If hair is tangled or matted, use a wide tooth comb or detangling brush. Hair should not be detangled when it is dry.

How to detangle your child’s hair
1. Wet your child’s hair with warm water.
2. Apply detangling spray or cream to hair.
3. Use a wide tooth comb or detangling brush.
4. Start combing at the ends of hair, then work your way up to the scalp.

**Conditioning**

When using hair conditioner, it is important to follow the instructions. They will let you know how much time is needed to condition different hair types.

**How to condition your child’s hair**

1. Wet your child’s hair with warm water.
2. Apply moisturizing and/or hydrating conditioner to hair.
3. Comb the conditioner completely through the hair by starting from the ends. Then, work your way up to the scalp.
4. Rinse conditioner completely from hair with cool water.
5. Pat dry hair with a towel.
6. Apply leave-in conditioner or detangling spray to wet or damp hair, if needed.

**Moisturizing**

Hair moisturizer or hair oil can be used on your child’s hair every day. If your child is on oxygen, do not use petroleum-based or oil-based products. Apply moisturizer to all of the hair. For short hair, use a dime-size amount of moisturizer. For medium to long hair, use a quarter-size amount of moisturizer.

**Styling**

Styling your child’s hair will help protect it from breaking.

- **Do not use heat tools like a curling iron, hair dryer or flat iron if your child is on oxygen.**
- Do not use a lot of high heat on hair. This can speed up damage to the hair. If heat is used, apply heat protectant before styling.
- Dry hair with a towel or blow dryer on low or medium settings. Do not use a blow dryer if your child is on oxygen.
- To keep the hair detangled, use fingers, a wide tooth comb or a detangling brush daily.
- Tight hair styles may lead to hair loss. They can put stress on your child’s scalp.
- Never use hot or boiling water on or near the hair. Hot water may cause scalp burns and permanent hair loss.