

The best ways to get shiny, soft winter hair



The season's harsh winds and frigid temperatures can be brutal on hair. "The elements strip the hair cuticle of natural moisturizing agents," says Francesca Fusco, M.D., a dermatologist at New York City's Mount Sinai Medical Center. "This dries the scalp and lifts the cuticle layers, making hair limp and brittle." And since jagged cuticles reflect light poorly, strands look dull, too. That's why we interviewed the top doctors, pored over the medical journals and tested the products to find the best ways to restore moisture to your mane.

Best conditioning treatment Aveda Sap Moss

For women dealing with dry hair, the hands-down favorite product is Aveda Sap Moss Nourishing Concentrate (\$18 for 4.2 oz., at aveda.com). This deep conditioner, which is applied to wet hair before shampooing, was awarded 5 out of 5 stars from reviewers on Drugstore.com. And on MakeupAlley.com (a website where women express their views on various beauty products), 91 percent indicated they would buy it again. Why is it so popular? Its potent combination of plant-based emollients, such as Icelandic moss and sap, work synergistically to replenish moisture and shine. It also contains high levels of organic honey, a powerful humectant that locks moisture into hair. "The acidic nature of honey helps balance the natural pH of hair, decreasing the evaporation of moisture and allowing the damaged layers of the hair shaft to lie more smoothly," explains Dr. Fusco.

TESTERS' CONSENSUS: (★★★★) Hair was smooth and shiny after one use. The earthy smell isn't great, but it disappears as hair dries.



This natural humectant helps lock in moisture.

Best nutrient Borage seed oil

"When it comes to hair, what you put *in* your body is more powerful than what you put *on* it," says Andrew Weil, M.D., author of *Healthy Aging* (Random House, 2005). Studies show the best nutrient for healthy locks is *gamma linoleic acid* (GLA), an omega-6 fatty acid that fortifies hair. Because dietary sources offer limited quantities of the nutrient, he advises adding a supplement. "Within six to eight weeks, you'll see a change. Hair will be thicker and more lustrous," he says. The richest GLA source is borage seed oil. (One to try: Health From The Sun Borage Oil 500 mg, \$13.99 for 90 capsules, at health-food stores.) Dr. Weil recommends 500 mg twice daily.

TESTERS' CONSENSUS: (★) Hair definitely appeared healthier and felt softer after a few weeks of taking a supplement.



The fatty acids in this flower restore hair's luster.

Best home remedy coconut oil

Hair is 91 percent protein, but wind and UV rays can break down protein bonds, leading to damaged strands notes Dr. Fusco. The proven remedy: coconut oil. A recent study in the *Journal of Cosmetic Science* found that, compared with mineral and sunflower oil (the two most-used moisturizing base oils in the hair-care industry), coconut oil was the only product that diminished protein damage. Researchers credit the oil's ability to penetrate the hair shaft and bond to proteins. Apply coconut oil to hair once a week. (One to try: Now Foods Coconut Oil, \$4.49 for 5 oz., at health-food stores.) Allow it to sit for 30 minutes before shampooing.

TESTERS' CONSENSUS: (★★) Left hair moisturized, but use only on ends since it can be too greasy for the scalp area.



The oil of this fruit fortifies strands against the elements.

Our ratings key

We bought and tested all the products recommended and rated them based on convenience, effectiveness and cost.

★★★★ This works so well, it's worth a special trip to the store.

★★ Excellent results—next time you're out shopping, be sure to pick this up.

★ When what you are currently using runs out, try this.