

Hair extensions are today's hot fashion accessory

Today's celebrities go from short locks to long in a matter of days. Do they have the inside scoop on some magical hair-growing serum? Not likely. What they do have is a stylist who has introduced them to the benefits of hair extensions.

Hair extensions give women the option to try on looks without spending weeks or months growing out their hair to achieve them. They're perfect for special occasions when a woman desires longer hair for a sexy evening look or to make an intricate up-do defy gravity. Extensions also add volume to limp hair and can cover up the damage done by a haircut mishap.

Types of Hair Extensions

The key to hair extensions looking beautiful and natural is to find a stylist who can expertly blend the extensions with your natural hair. It also lies in the type of hair extension chosen. The two main avenues to travel include synthetic extensions or real hair extensions. Synthetic extensions are less expensive than real hair, but won't look nearly as natural. Real hair extensions are made from human hair that has been color-stripped. The hair is then dyed to match particular hair colors and tones.

How Are Extensions Applied?

Semi-permanent hair extensions can be ap-

plied in many different ways. Some of the more popular methods include the following:

- Fusion:** Fusion extensions usually are applied with a form of keratin bond or glue and the strands are applied individually. Waxes may also be used for adherence.

- Weaves:** The natural hair is braided first and then wefts, or sections, of hair are sewn into the braids.

- Tape:** Toupee tape that may be enhanced with glue is used to adhere sections of hair.

- Hand Sewn/Tied:** Extensions can be applied directly to the natural strands by means of special thread or hand tied.

A combination of methods may also be used depending upon hair type and the style desired.

How Long Will My Extensions Last?

Depending upon the method used, hair extensions generally last a few weeks or months before they will need to be reapplied. Because hair extensions do have the propensity to put excess weight on natural hair and may lead to damage or breakage (relying on a professional stylist to do your extensions minimizes chances for hair damage), remove them after the recommended time.

Special Care for Extensions

Extensions require different care from your natural hair.

When washing, use a gentle shampoo and conditioner and try not to overly tangle your hair. Do not get conditioner on attachment points.

You can use a normal hair dryer for drying methods.

When brushing, use soft-tipped bristles. Start by brushing the bottom of your hair and slowly work upwards to where the extensions adhere to your natural hair.

When using heated styling devices, avoid the attachment point of the extensions.

Go to a salon for cutting, coloring, or other permanent hair changes.

Avoid chlorine or salt water. If you do swim, wash hair immediately to rinse out the chemicals from the extensions.

Tie back your hair in windy conditions to avoid tangles.

For women who want to experiment with the possibilities offered by extensions without making a commitment, clip-in extensions could be the answer. These simply clip onto your natural hair, and removed daily. One popular option is Do Clip-in Hair Extension Systems created with Jessica Simpson.

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From left, Amber Nuttycomb, Dr. Sarah White, Jamie Applegate, Dog (John Henry)

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