



Going Natural

The four things you *must* know before transitioning your hair, plus the essential guide to looking great as you're doing it.

These days more women are ditching the relaxer to wear their hair natural. Thinking about joining their ranks? Keep these points in mind:

1 You'll need to be patient. "When it comes to the whole growing-out process, everyone is like, 'I want it now, I want it now,' but hair averages only about half an inch of growth per month," says Tippi Shorter, Aveda global artistic director for textured hair. "That's just six inches a year, which is one of the main reasons transitioning is such a huge challenge for a lot of people."

2 Your vision of natural may not match your reality.

"A lot of the women in my family have gorgeous spirally, big curls," says Shorter. "I assumed my hair would look the same when I went natural, but it's kind of frizzy and bushy with no definition—not what I was expecting."

3 You should plan on lots of little trims if you don't do the big chop. "Trims should mirror your hair growth," says Shorter. "For every half inch to inch that grows out, cut off a half inch to an inch of the relaxed ends so you're not stuck with a weird growing-out shape."

4 Your hair may be drier once you go natural.

It sounds counterintuitive since natural hair is chemical-free. In fact, though, when the hair shaft is straight, your scalp oils can go directly from root to tip, according to Cynthia Alvarez, Dove Hair curl expert. "With curly hair," she says, "they never reach the ends." Regular moisturizing is essential. Smooth on a few drops of oil (try *Dove Pure Care Dry Oil Nourishing Treatment*, \$12; drugstores) in the morning or apply a leave-in treatment (like *Motions Nourish Leave-In Conditioner*, \$10; drugstores) to damp hair when you get out of the shower.

While You're Waiting

There's no need to sacrifice style during your transition period. Here are a few chic ways to deal with a head of hair that's half curly, half straight.



EMBRACE THE BLOW-OUT. Prep with a smoothing shampoo and conditioner (we like *Carol's Daughter Cupuaçu Anti-Frizz Smoothing Shampoo*, \$20, and *Conditioner*, \$22; carolsdaughter.com) to soften hair and make it easier to straighten.



TRY A ROLLER OR ROD SET. "There's no pulling on the fragile area where the relaxed and natural hair meet, so it's a gentle option," Shorter says. To reduce knots pre-set, try *Aveda Be Curly Intensive Detangling Masque* (\$27; aveda.com).



EXPERIMENT WITH BRAIDS OR TWIST STYLES.

"They give you a uniform texture throughout your hair," says Alvarez.



GET A WEAVE. "You're not selling out!" says Alvarez. "A weave lets you have beautiful hair without living through that awkward in-between phase."