



## **What to consider before you commit to dying your hair**

Hair dye is becoming the norm these days. From giving those tired highlights a bit of a touch up before summer finally arrives to going all out and changing your colour entirely, there are countless reasons to consider dyeing your hair, but how much thought do you really give to it? Changing the colour of your hair might seem like a fairly easy thing to do, but there are some things that you need to give due consideration before going under the foils or trying to DIY it at home. Will colouring your hair damage it? How long should you wait between colourings? Are there alternatives to hair dye? In this article, we'll be shedding some light on these things and more...

**Produced by The Media & Marketing Team  
The London Hairdressing Apprenticeship Academy Limited.**

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## 10 things to know before you dye your hair.

### Know your colour

Believe it or not, your natural hair colour will provide an excellent starting point when it comes to picking out the right shades and tones. It's not simply a case of picking a colour and going for it, as the results probably won't align with your expectations. Your natural colour is likely to have nuances and tones that only a professional will be able to pick up on, so it's always worth having a conversation with your stylist if it's something you're considering.



### Wigs can help

It's true. If you're considering a drastic change to your colour - something bold and different for a new season - then consider trying on a wig. It's a quick and easy way to figure out if a colour is right for you and matches your skin tone and style. Most stylists recommend that you do this if the colour you're considering is 3 shades lighter or darker than your natural colour.

### Do you swim regularly?

May seem like an odd question, but chlorine strips away the hair cuticle and allows minerals from the water to affect your hair and its colour. After using hair dye you'll want to avoid any underwater activity for at least a couple of weeks, perhaps a month to be safe.

### **Picked a colour? Go a shade lighter**

It's known that most of the time hair dye comes out slightly darker than the image on the box, so it's always best to go a shade lighter than the one you pick to be safe. It's the best thing you can do because it's easier to ramp up a colour's intensity than it is to tone it down.

### **Consider skipping your hair in the shower**

Our bodies are fantastic at producing natural oils that keep our hair soft, shiny and protected. You don't have to stop showering, but the day before you plan to dye your hair skip the shampoo and conditioner. So called 'second-day hair' is perfect for dying as your hair will be more manageable, easier to section, and naturally soft. If you hate second-day hair, pick a day at the weekend when you don't have to go out, or wear a hat if you can pull it off.

### **Choose your shampoo carefully**

This probably gets the least consideration. Certain shampoos on the market, such as clarifying or dandruff-fighting shampoos, can strip away the hair's colour with chemicals. If you want to retain the effects of your colour for longer, invest in a colour preserving shampoo which tends to be more easy-going, natural and gentle on your hair.

### **Expect a little damage**

It's perfectly normal for your hair to experience a little bit of damage when applying colour, even if you're trying to get it back to its natural tone. Hydrogen peroxide is an ingredient that's prevalent in all hair dyes, it works by opening the cuticles, so of course your hair will not feel as smooth as it did before. A good way to combat this is to use a post colour treatment conditioner to ensure the cuticles are closed.

### **Stay grounded and be realistic**

Drastic changes to your hair colour can't be achieved overnight. You may see brassy, ashy results if you're going for a drastic change and this is perfectly normal. More heavy changes are likely to take a little persistence and they'll occur gradually. A good way to avoid disappointment is to speak with your stylist and choose shades and tones that are achievable based on your natural colour.

### **If you're going DIY, get more than you need**

The amount of hair dye you need depends on the thickness and length of your hair, but it's always better to have too much than not enough. Once you've picked out what you think you need, get another box just to be safe.

### **Choose your time wisely**

Again, this only really applies if you're dying at home. If you're having your hair professionally coloured then you'll have nothing to worry about, but if you're dying at home, then do it before 6pm. Most hair dyes have a number you can call if you encounter any problems that will put you in touch with an expert. Most of these lines close after 6pm and you'll miss out on that support if anything goes wrong.



## **What does hair dye actually do to your hair?**

Colouring your hair with dye is a scientific process, and there are lots of chemicals involved. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but if we're talking about things to consider before you make a decision, this is certainly one of them. Here's a step by step guide of what hair dye does and how it works.

### **Step one: The ammonia in your hair dye will break through your cuticles**

In order for hair dye to do its job, it needs to break through some of your hair's natural defences. Of course, this isn't ideal for someone who's concerned about hair health, but it's a necessary evil. The ammonia lifts the cuticle and lets the dye in to do its work. The damage isn't excessive and is usually instantly treatable with the right shampoos and moisturisers.

### **Step two: The new colour pigment gets to work**

Once the cuticle is lifted, the new pigment is ready to step and take over. This dye begins the process as a set of tiny molecules that are small enough to fit into each individual shaft of hair. Once they're in, they react with each other to create bigger molecules, leaving them 'trapped' in the hair strands - this is one of the reasons you can't simply wash out hair dye.

### **Side note: Even ammonia-free dyes still lift your cuticles**

If ammonia is needed to lift the cuticles of your hair strands and let the dye in, how come there are ammonia-free dyes on the market? These products contain an alternative to ammonia known as ethanolamine which still lifts the cuticles, just to a lesser degree. This might be slightly less damaging to your hair, but will require more frequent dying to retain the colour.

### **Step three: The longer you dye, the more damage you cause**

Going the right way about dying your hair takes time, but bear in mind that while the dye is on your hair and active, a chemical process is taking place, so it is inevitable that damage will take place. If the cuticles are lifted for too long, more damage can be done than is necessary. Which is why a post colour conditioning treatment is recommended to ensure the chemical process is stopped and the cuticles are closed.

### **Step four: Worried about the smell? Don't be**

When you walk into a salon or dye your hair at home you often experience that harsh smell of chemicals and it can be really off-putting. It's nothing to worry about, though. It's simply the peroxide reacting with the proteins in our hair and this releases sulphur which is what creates the smell. It's harmless and nothing to worry about.

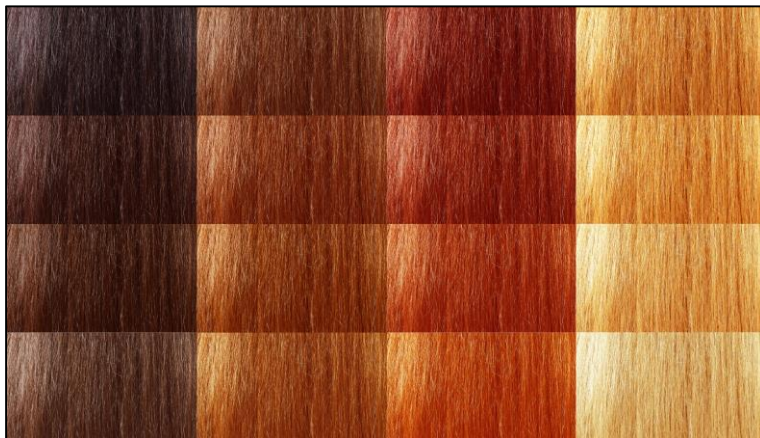
### **Side note: your hair won't fall out**

It's a common misconception that overdoing it when it comes to dying your hair will trigger an episode of hair loss, but there is absolutely no evidence supporting this. Doing a bad job of dying your hair can certainly damage it and leave it feeling brittle and dry and many people confuse this with hair loss, or at least regard it as an early sign of hair loss to come, Good conditioning, proper hair care and a healthy diet should avoid this altogether, even with excessive dying.

## **Frequently Asked Questions about hair colouring**

### **Q: Should I do it myself or go to a professional?**

**A:** If it's your first time you should certainly go to a professional as they'll be able to advise on the right colour and shade based on your natural colour and skin tone. You'll also be tested for allergies, which is very important before choosing a dye.



### **Q: Will colouring my hair damage it?**

**A:** Permanent dye uses peroxide which lifts the cuticle layer (the protective layer) of your hair to let the dye in. The layer is then sealed again by shampooing and conditioning. If you use a dye with the wrong level of peroxide or change your hair colour too much, then you will cause excess damage to your hair. This can be avoided with proper hair care and conditioning treatments.

**Q: What's the difference between semi, demi and permanent hair colouring?**

**A:** Semi-permanent hair dye doesn't contain peroxide and therefore does not lift the cuticles. This means it'll do less damage to the hair but will also only last for up to 12 shampoos. Demi-permanent only contains a small amount of peroxide which means it can deposit colour between the cuticle and cortex. This enables the colour to last for up to 26 shampoos. Permanent hair dye is the dye we've been referring to in this article, containing the requisite amount of peroxide to fully lift the cuticle.

**Q: Will it cover my grey hair?**

**A:** It certainly will. It's one of the reasons many people choose to dye their hair. If you have more the 50% grey hair, it's better to use a permanent hair dye to achieve the desired result.

**Q: How long should I wait between colours?**

**A:** Really this comes down to whether you are maintaining the existing colour or changing the colour. If you are maintaining the colour, then this will depend on how fast your hair grows and how much fade has taken place. If you are changing your hair colour, then condition allowing, as often as you like. The key is to ensure you seek professional advice, and if you are home colouring, always follow manufacturer's instructions.

**Q: Can hair colour and highlights be done on the same day?**

**A:** If your hair is in good condition then there's no reason this can't be done.

## Natural alternatives to hair dye

At the beginning of the article, we mentioned that there are some natural alternatives to hair dye that are worth considering, particularly if you're new to hair colouring or are nervous about its effects. It is possible to use 100% natural methods containing nothing but herbs and edible ingredients to dye your hair.

There are many reasons you might consider dying your hair naturally. Perhaps you're allergic to a key ingredient of most off-the-shelf dyes, or maybe your hair isn't in good enough condition to withstand the harsh chemicals that come with dying. Most hair dyes on the marketing are 100% safe, but it's perfectly natural to be concerned when approaching hair dye for the first time.

So how does natural hair dye work? Usually, it's a gradual, progressive process but some of them can yield instant effects. Lemons can be used to lighten or add highlights to hair but works slowly over several uses, whereas something more potent like black walnut powder is more powerful and drastic and the effects are almost instant.





However, you choose to dye your hair, it's important to consider all of the options and the benefits of each. Always take the time to think long and hard before committing to a permanent or natural dye as the effects can be difficult to reverse. However, handled in the right way and with the right level of care, you'll be able to change your style as often as you like and be bold, confident and ready for a new direction anytime.

**Remember: alternative hair dyes can contain metallic salts, which could react with professional products. Ensure you have an incompatibility test before swapping to permanent colouring.**

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