**Hair and Skin Guide for African American Children**

**The Purpose for this Guide**When a child comes into state custody due to safety or neglect issues, they may not have received training in proper hair and skin care. This information provides some basic hair and skin care principles for children of African American descent.

**Hair and Scalp Care**  
Moisturizing African American hair is very important to maintaining a healthy scalp and hair in young children. An African American’s hair is coarser and may appear to be dryer than someone who is Caucasian because sebum (a substance from oil follicles) does not flow to the ends of the hair. This is natural for an African American’s hair and when understood and managed properly, can spare the child embarrassment and enhance their self-esteem. If the child’s scalp is scaly and itchy, causing much discomfort, they may have dandruff or seborrhea dermatitis. This could also be the result of ringworm, which looks like dandruff or seborrhea dermatitis. In African American children, dandruff and fungus may resemble dry scalp and using excessive oils actually may make both problems worse.

**Basic Scalp/Hair Care Principles**   
It is recommended that you shampoo and condition a child’s hair once a week using a corrective protein/T-Gel based shampoo or anti-fungal/anti-seborrhea shampoo such as Nizoral or Selsun for a minimum of ten minutes. A good rinse conditioner will correct some of the dryness and brittleness of the hair that these shampoos may produce. It is recommended to apply oil to the hair after washing and before styling the hair. Washing a coarser grade of hair too often can make the hair brittle and could possibly damage the hair.

* **Oiling the Hair:** Separate the hair with a comb in small sections and oil the hair beginning at the roof. This oil treatment may help prevent dandruff due to the dryness of the scalp. Oiling the hair can be done as daily hair maintenance, depending on hair type. Do not use hair grease on the scalp.
* **Cutting/Trimming Hair:** Take children to an experienced professional in cutting coarser types of hair. Do not try to cut it yourself, as the result may not be what you expect if not familiar with African American hair.
* **Relaxers/Hot Iron:** An experienced hair stylist who specializes in this type of hair care can determine if the child’s hair needs relaxing, pressing or flat ironing.

**Hair Products**

**Shampoos with pH balance**

Nozoral OTC

Head and Shoulders

Kera Care

Elentee

Beauty thru Health Hair Repair

Gentle Treatment

Johnson and Johnson

Revlon

Dudley

Optimum Care

Beautiful Beginnings

**Conditioners**

Humectress by Nexus

Kera Care

Elantee

Beauty thru Health Rinse

Conditioner

Kera Care

TCB

Johnson and Johnson

Dudley

Optimum Care

Beautiful Beginnings

**Hair Moisturizers/Oils for Styling**

All Ways - oil moisturizer

and conditioning treatment

Elantee Curl and Wave Moisturizer

Elantee Control Lotion

or Curl Activator

Humectress by Nexus

Posners Bergamont

Carrot Oil

MoistaCare

Pink Moisturizer

Ultra Sheen

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**Hair Tools**

* Wide tooth comb
* Plastic bristle brush
* Plastic barrettes, clips
* Small scrunchies
* Small tooth comb for boys with short hair
* Long tooth pick for boys with longer
* hair and children with Afros
* Hair clamps
* Covered bands

**Skin Care**Environmental factors contribute greatly to the occurrence of dry skin. Repeated exposure to solvents, deodorant soaps and bubble baths in association with frequent hot bathing will remove skin oil and other natural moisturizing factors (NMF) from the skin, increasing water loss up to seventy-five times the normal rate. Thus, skin is not dry because it lacks “skin oils,” but because it lacks water. The purpose of the skin and NMF is to hold the water in the skin. Winter weather is the major cause of dry skin. Low humidity, cold air and wind all contribute to the removal of water from the skin. The dry heat of most homes also removes skin’s water.

A common misconception about African American skin is that you must “oil or grease it” using products such as Vaseline or cocao butter to either remove the “ash” from legs or to help treat scars or dark spots. Although there is occasionally a need for Vaseline for very dry skin or eczema (itchy, dry skin rash), cocoa butter neither fades dark spots nor helps reduce the visisbility of scarring or stretch marks. In fact, the repeated use of cocoa butter for treatment of acnes pimples will actually make the acne worse. Its use for dark spots or acne is discouraged for African American skins, especially teenagers. Proper skin care helps to prevent the ashy appearance that may appear on dry pigmented skin.

* Take a lukewarm bath/shower everyday. If excess drying or irritation occurs, you may want to cleanse the skin with a cleanser/lubricant such as Cetaphil. (Get instructions from a physician).
* Use a mild soap or cleansing bar such as Purpose, White Dove or Aveeno. Aveeno powder or Nutra Soothe can be added to a tub of cool water to moisturize the skin.
* After bathing, gently rise off the skin with cool/lukewarm water to remove any residual skin particles.
* After rinsing off, pat the skin dry with a towel and then immediately apply a good lotion (ELTA Crème, Moisturel, Lubriderm, Curel) all over the body to hold the water in the skin (Do not let the skin dry off completely and then apply the lotion. Remember, the skin will be much drier after a bath than it was before).
* In winter, a humidifier used as directed can assist in maintaining skin moisture.
* It is recommended that a protective sunscreen be applied to all skin areas that are exposed to the sun’s rays.

**Common Skin Disorders**

Keloid is a skin condition that looks like raised, shiny bubbly skin. It is treated with antibiotic and anti-inflammatory medication prescribed by a physician. This disorder is more common in dark skinned people.

Ringworm starts as a small red patch that grows to 1" in diameter. As it grows, the central area heals and leaves a red ring on the skin. Ringworm is infectious and can be spread from human to human or transmitted from cats or dogs. Ringworm of the scalp symptoms includes frequent scratching of the head, dandruff-like flakes, and small scaly patches on the scalp, hair loss or thinning, and small black dots on the scalp. If ringworm is detected, consult a health care provider immediately and treat all family members as soon as possible. It is also important to note that over the counter ointments and medication are not effective. Mongolian Spot is a benign pigmented lesion that is found in African American, Asian, and Hispanic children. The color is black or blue-green. This spot is found in the lower spinal area, especially on African American newborns and in the shoulder area. When this spot is present on an arm or leg, it is usually located over a muscle. An inexperienced observer may mistake a Mongolian Spot for a bruise. If there is concern, contact a dermatologist.

Impetigo, a bacterial infection that can occur almost anywhere, is most common in young children. A small patch of tiny blisters appears, which soon break, exposing a patch of red, moist, weeping skin beneath. Gradually a tan crust resembling brown sugar covers the area. Infection spreads at the edges; newly infected areas may develop on other parts of the body. Disinfect all combs, hairbrushes, and hats used by the child.

Eczema is a skin disorder that can be present on any part of the body. It is often identified by a dry patch of skin usually in the creases of the elbow, knees, and particularly the scalp. The dry patch of skin can be very irritating and usually is not resolved with regular skin moisturizer. Eczema must be distinguished from ring worm.

**Skin Lotions**

* Vaseline Intensive Care
* Keri Lotion
* Curel Lotion
* Lubriderm
* Moisturel
* Jergens
* (very dry skin formula)

**Resources**

This guide is the result of many hours of work and collaboration of numerous individuals and organizations on a volunteer basis. TFI and other resources mentioned do not endorse any of the suggested products. This information is a guide to help caregivers better maintain the hair and skin of African American children.

**Between Families Newsletter  
Training Questions  
Hair and Skin Guide for African American Children   
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**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONAIRRE FOR ½ HOUR CREDIT AND SUBMIT TO YOUR ASSIGNED FOSTER CARE WORKER**

**Questions:**

1. It is natural for an African American’s hair to be coarser and appear to be drier than someone who is Caucasian. True or False
2. A good \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will correct some of the dryness and brittleness of the hair that shampoos may produce.
3. You should shampoo and condition African American hair how often?
4. Weekly
5. Daily
6. Never
7. Every other day
8. Oiling the hair should be done in large sections, beginning at the ends and working towards the scalp. True or False
9. Oiling the hair can be done as daily maintenance, depending on what?
10. The age of the child
11. The length of the hair
12. The hair type
13. None of the above
14. A professional who has prior experience with African American hair is the best option for haircuts or treatments. True or False
15. Proper hair and skin care for African American children can help to spare the child \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and enhance their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
16. List three hair tools that may be helpful in caring for African American hair:

19. In winter, a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ used as directed can assist in maintaining skin moisture.
20. What should be applied to all skin areas that are exposed to the sun’s rays?
21. Vaseline
22. Lotion
23. Protective sunscreen
24. Nothing