

## ■ OFF CAMPUS ■

# TACKLING HAIR WOES

## Quick fixes for broke, busy students

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Students live with a hundred raging problems every day. Hair issues can be the bane of their existence if left without care or maintenance. This is not to blame them, because when one has to juggle several priorities vying for first place, ignoring the slow decline of one's gorgeous locks seems not so bad until one day when they realise it is too late. However, the good news is that there are a number of ways in which these problems can be nipped in the bud with low-cost, low-effort solutions.

### Scalp acne

If you are prone to facial acne, breaking out around the hairline or deep under your hair is not uncommon and this often leads to hair falling out. The biological principle is basically the same as for any other type of acne. It is caused by a clogged pore, in this case, the hair follicle, the pore through which the hair grows. This can be a result of overuse of hair products like hairsprays, styling gel, dry shampoo, oils, etc. To add more, buildups of sweat, dead cells, dirt, microbes, and sebum also contribute equally.

It can be cleared up by making a few changes in haircare. For example, frequent hair washes and keeping hair accessories, such as hair combs, pillowcases, headbands, hats, scarves, etc. clean go a long way. Alternatively, shampoos formulated with anti-acne ingredients like tea tree oil and salicylic acid can also improve scalp health. However, before resorting to any cosmetic treatment, cleanliness and personal hygiene take the vote.

### Split ends

Yet another messy hair trouble often remedied by regular trims every six to eight weeks. But, persisting

split ends hint to a more serious concern such as chemical damage from hair dyes and bleach, heat damage from repeated use of styling tools and so on. All of these eventually strip the oil out of the hair and make it dry; and dry hair is more likely to split (and tangle).

So, in order to avoid developing split ends, it is important to incorporate weekly moisturisation with serums and oils into one's haircare routine. It is best to apply hair masks at least twice a week, and different hair oils for different purposes. Hair oil promoting hair growth should be applied to the roots and for short periods of time whereas hair oil meant to treat hair breakage and protect the hair from pollution or heat should be applied after washing, along the lengths of the hair.

### Hard water damage

Mineral deposits from hard water make the hair dull and lifeless. But this damage is, thankfully, completely reversible. Minerals like calcium and magnesium form a film on the scalp and hair that regular shampoos are unable to remove. Clarifying shampoos (not meant for daily use) contain strong chelating agents that break down the layer of minerals weighing down the hair strands, which in turn lead to increased hair fall.

Unfortunately, the list of consequences goes on. The mineral residue also makes the hair dry, frizzy, and prone to tangling. At the same time, the scalp is affected and can be itchy and flaky causing more dandruff, and even greasiness! As for dyed hair, hard water leads to the colour fading sooner. In the long run, the water will render most hair products ineffective. Shampoos tend to lather less leaving you with the "unclean feeling" despite having washed it. And, conditioners and oils seem to fail at their magic of reclaiming the old glory.

For this, a quick solution to managing hard water-damaged hair is a vinegar rinse, suitably apple cider

vinegar, but essentially any kind of vinegar diluted in (bottled) water is effective. Rinses work best when the hair is in contact with the mixture for about one to two minutes on a weekly or biweekly basis. Too much exposure to vinegar will dry out the scalp leading to irritation. As vinegar is slightly acidic, it helps in dissolving the mineral layer. Nonetheless, overexposure will strip natural oils from the strands, trapping you in an everlasting cycle of dry hair, frizz, and tangles.

### Hair fall

Hair fall is a side-effect of many underlying hair-related conditions. Pinpointing the main cause may take some time and effort but it leads to better efficacy of the treatment. Improper combing techniques and hair-drying methods easily damage the hair. To tackle this, always gently detangle using the wide tooth and opt for drying the hair in the air or using less vigour with the towel or heat settings. Dry, rough hair tends to tangle and detangling itself can tear apart a few strands every brush.

It is best to not let the hair reach such a stage. And even more important is to consider if your hair is brittle. In most cases, brittleness is due to lack of hydration or loss of proteins through various heat or chemical treatments. Brittle hair easily snaps under the slightest of stress. Depending on your hair needs, periodic deep conditioning with hair masks is likely to bring back the elasticity. Out of a myriad of reasons, abnormal hair loss in the shower cues towards hard water damage.

Another neglected cause of losing hair is an imbalanced diet. Daily intake of vitamin D/E, zinc, iron, biotin, protein, etc. are strongly recommended to boost hair growth and strength. An easy way to fill this gap in your diet is by incorporating dairy, eggs, nuts, and fish weekly and slowly building the regime as necessary with other products.

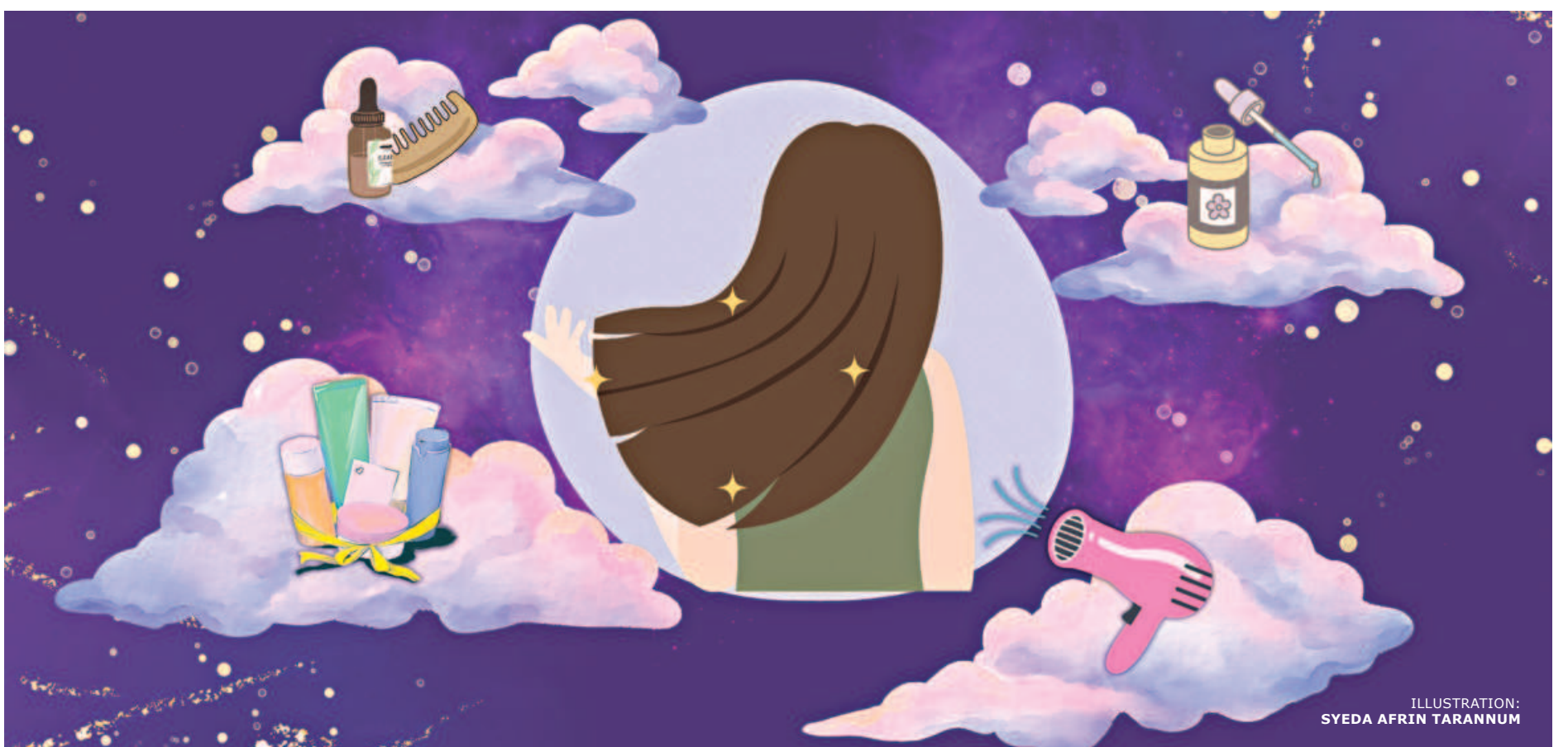


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