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Photo of happy people with curly hair

Lockdown life left you lusting for luscious locks?

WHAT WE ARE ABOUT

Natural haircare is on the rise, and with lockdown and social distancing keeping you away from other people and their peepers, has there ever been a better time to take the plunge?

As fashion changes and embraces a wider view of what is in vogue, individuality and acceptance of "you" is a fast growing trend. What could be more you, than wearing your hair as nature made it?

We aim to help you understand your hair, what type it is, why it does what it does - and to give you some basic tools to make the most of it. We will also point you to some amazing resources to help continue your journey.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

STRUCTURE

Cuticle, Cortex, Medulla

HAIR TYPE 2, 3, 4?

a, b, c?

POROSITY

Low Medium High

Close up photo of glossy curls

What does it all mean?!

No idea? Check out Hair Science here.

Know your cuticle from your cortex? Head straight to Hair Types here.

YOUR WEAPONS



ROUTINE

Co-washing Plopping Diffusing

Practices to polish that preen!



TECHNIQUES

Clumping Praying hands Pineapple

Good things - no really!

Learn what you can do



TOOLS

Bonnet Brush **BIG** diffuser

Things to make it a little easier

THE DEBATES & FURTHER READING

Silicones & Sulfates? The big bad?

To colour, or not to colour?

Straightening - is it ever ok?

The Curly Girl Method

Manes by Mel

Naturally Curly

Cosmo - How To Style

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Good Housekeeping - Hair Types

Read more about the hot topics in the curly world, or find new resources here

OUR MISSION - TO GIVE EVERY PERSON A FIRM FOUNDATION IN THEIR SEARCH FOR AMAZING CURLY HAIR

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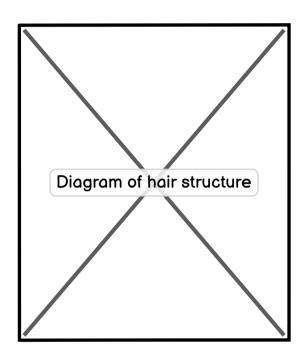
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Photo of hair looking sciencey

To get started, it helps to understand what your hair is made of

WHAT HAIR IS MADE OF



The shaft of a strand of hair consists of three distinct layers: cuticle, cortex and medulla (usually).

The **cuticle** is the outside layer, it is made of scale like keratin structures which overlap like tiles on a roof, keeping the insides nice and safe. When the parts of the cuticle are all laying flat, nice and tidy, you get shiny tresses! The cuticle naturally becomes brittle over time, through washing, the elements and styling. Oils can help keep the keratin flexible and prevent breakage.

The **cortex** is the thickest part of the hair strand, and sits inside the cuticle. The pigments and proteins which give hair its colour and degree of curl exist here. When colouring or perming it is this layer which is affected most heavily.

The **medulla** is the core of the hair strand, in most hair types. However, in fine fair hair the medulla sometimes simply doesn't exist! It is not known exactly what the medulla does, or why it is present in some hair types but not others. It is theorised that the medulla plays a role in supporting or creating the structure since it most often appears in thicker, darker hair strands.

Lush Cosmetics

THE ROOT OF THE CURL

FOLLICLE SHAPE

The follicle shape is thought to be the largest determining factor in hair type. The rounder the follicle, the straighter the hair. If a follicle takes a more oval shape the hair it produces will be curlier.

Diagram of follicle

Learn about hair types next!

FOLLICLE DIRECTION

The angle of the follicle relative to the skin also help to determine the degree of curl in a hair. A follicle which is perpendicular to the scalp will grow straight hair, any change in this angle contributes to the degree of curl.

<u>Helix</u>

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Photo of different curls

All about the hair type, and the porosity

HAIR TYPES

STRAIGHT

Type ones are straight:

- a) Straighter than straight b) Straight
- c) Kinda straight

WAVY

Type twos are wavy, with hair that primarily lies near the head:

- a) Very slight 'S' shape
- b) Defined 'S' shape
- c) Very well-defined 'S' shape starting straight from the root

CURLY

Type three are curly, with volume and a corkscrew shape:

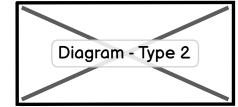
- a) Large loose ringlets, approx 5cm diameter
- b) Tighter ringlets, approx 3cm diameter
- c) Tighter again, approx 1cm diameter

COILY

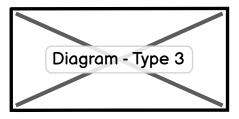
Type fours are coily, with huge volume and super tight curls:

- a) Very constricted, defined, tight 'S' shape coils
- b) Very tight 'Z' shape
- c) Very tight zig-zag, sometimes too tight to even see!

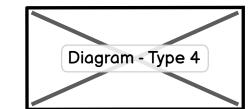
Diagram - Type 1



3



4



Allure

POROSITY

Remember the cuticle? Porosity relates to the cuticle, and to the positioning of your roof tiles. If your roof tiles are lying beautifully flat, one atop the other, your hair is likely to have very low porosity. If your roof tiles are sticking up all over the show and broken in places, the hair is likely to have high porosity.

Low porosity means that it is difficult for moisture, or any substance, to enter the shaft of the hair. The hair will be sleek and shiny take a long time to dry and a long time to wet through. The up side of low porosity hair is that it locks in any moisture which does penetrate the shaft, keeping it flexible and low-frizz.

High porosity is naturally the opposite of low porosity. Substances are able to easily penetrate the shaft, but are equally easily lost. This leads to brittle, breakable strands and a lot of frizz. Coloured, relaxed or permed hair is very likely to be highly porous, along with that regularly treated with heat.

A common porosity test is to take a strand of hair and place it into a vessel of water. If the strand slowly sinks to the bottom, it has medium porosity. If the strand sinks like a stone, it has high porosity. If the strand floats in the water, it has low porosity.

L'Oreal



SUMMARY

You hopefully now have a vague idea of your dominant curl type, and your porosity. Both of these have a factor in choosing the type of products to apply to your hair to achieve the result you want. The interesting part is that most curly bods have more than one hair type at any one time, and that as hair transitions to a curly routine those curls types can all change. As such, as you progress through your curly journey of discovery it is a good idea to occasionally check porosity and hair type and revise what you are doing accordingly.

Learn what you can do

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Photo of hair in product

You know your hair, time for the tricks

WASH ROUTINE



Many curly folks wash their hair once, maybe twice a week. Washing curly hair lots, even low porosity hair, causes it to lose moisture, and therefore to break. Limiting this allows the hair to retain moisture and achieve the holy grail of curlydom - to grow out. The squished shape of the follicle which produces curly hair also prevents the efficient application of sebum to the length of the hair, the gland simply isn't in the right place, so curly hair doesn't get so greasy.

There is a school of thought which also eschews shampoo, as the active ingredients in soaps are designed to thoroughly strip away oils. They tend to dry out hair, so a technique called co-washing is adopted instead. In its simplest form, this is the process of applying a conditioner to the hair and vigorously rub the scalp for a minimum of two minutes. Great for the bingo wings, it has to be said - if your arms don't ache, you aren't doing it right!

In removing the use of shampoo, it is considered good practice to also therefore stop using silicone based products. The sulfates in shampoo are effective at stripping away the residue from the hair, and without it they can build up on the strands leaving hair not feeling clean.

Alcohol based products should also be avoided, since they are drying to the strand as a result of their evaporative nature.

TECHNIQUES

To quote Mel, of Manes by Mel:

IF IT'S FRIZZY WHEN IT'S WET IT WILL BE FRIZZY WHEN IT'S DRY!

The overall goal of washing curly hair, and subsequently applying product is to create the unfortunately termed 'clumps'. Clumps are little bundles of curls all lying the same way, such that they form a clump, hair in clumps, left alone to dry, dries into ringlets, and not to a frizzy mess! Win!

Leave the shower with sopping, dripping wet hair. By the time you are dry it should still be saturated and make squishy noises if you squeeze it.

Apply your chosen product to palms, then rake through with the fingers to evenly distribute (this will vary a bit from product to product). Once complete, place flat palms either side of the hair (praying hands) and smooth them along the length of the hair. This will encourage the separated clumps to reform. Some find a Denman brush, or similar, effective for doubling up on raking and praying hands.

Time to plop! Wrap your lovingly crafted clumps in a towel, preferably microfibre, and just leave to dry for a bit, until no longer dripping and you can go about your day.

Do not touch your hair at this point! If air drying, just leave it alone, touching it causes it to dry unevenly, those beautiful clumps to separate, and (you guessed it) to frizz up.

If diffusing, start with the roots and diffuse from a distance, low heat, low speed (takes ages). Dry upside down for volume at the root. Once the roots are dry, move on to the lengths, again try not to touch too much as this causes the clumps to separate, and frizz to appear!

Et voila! Lovely defined curls!

TOOLS



COTTON - Is not your friend in this. Cotton is amazing, it absorbs many times its own weight in water before becoming saturated, and is fairly coarse. The super absorbency dries hair out too quickly, causing frizz. Cotton pillowcases are more abrasive against the hair than say satin or silk, also damaging those clumps! Use a microfibre towel (or weirdly, an old t-shirt) to plop. Use a silk or satin pillowcase, or alternatively, nab yourself a sexy silk bonnet to keep those curls safe all night!



SCRUNCHIES - safely contain curls without making indents in them, unlike regular hairbands. Overnight pineappling is a really popular way to preserve the curls which are on top of your hair when it is loose. By putting your hair into a top knot right on the top of your head, the hair which is exposed to the friction of the pillow is the underneath hair, which is out of sight when hair is down.



BRUSHES - Scalp brushes and brushes like a Denman are great for in the shower, or distributing product through wet hair. It's a personal preference thing, some find it works, and love it, others find it massively increases the frizz. Bit of trial and error, as with all things curly! (We are not affiliated with Denman, nor do we receive any contributions from any sales or traffic).

Read more about the hot topics in the curly world, or find new resources here

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Photo of hair products

You've got the basics, you want to know about products and regimes!

THE BIG DEBATES



Sulfate, silicone and alcohol free? Is it the only way? Is it the best way. There are multiple takes on whether co-washing and the use of 'bad' products is as terrible as it comes across. The fact of the matter is that every head is different, every life is different, and what works for one person won't necessarily work for another with the same curl type and porosity.

Is colouring really so bad? As a somewhat invasive treatment it does, by its very nature, penetrate the hair shaft and affect the cortex. Some colours also contain components which lift the cuticle to allow deeper, more permanent colours creating a higher porosity shaft than if not coloured. Does that mean you shouldn't colour? It really comes down to your experience of colouring your curls, and how it affects them.

Heat and straighteners? The big no-no, agreed across the board is that heat and straightening is bad for the hair, for only a short term result. Drying with heat evaporates moisture from the shaft over and above the level to which it would if drying naturally or with very low heat. Ironing hair out has the same effect. The consensus is don't, but if you have to, don't do it often and make sure to get a moisture mask on there sharpish!

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE



The major player in the curly revolution is <u>The Curly Girl Method</u>. For endless information, check out their website or Facebook groups. The groups are really supportive and full of people who have undergone the process, survived the transition phase and have worked out what works for them.

If co-washing, silicone and sulfate free isn't your bag, or you want to still colour, check out Manes by Mel for an alternative take on curly haircare.

Naturally Curly is another great resource, full of information about techniques, products and tools, and lots of background information on curly science.

GOOD LUCK!

We are always trying to add new content, with sections planned on products and another to help you more easily identify your curl type and porosity combo. If you have suggestions or questions, get in touch, we would love to hear from you!

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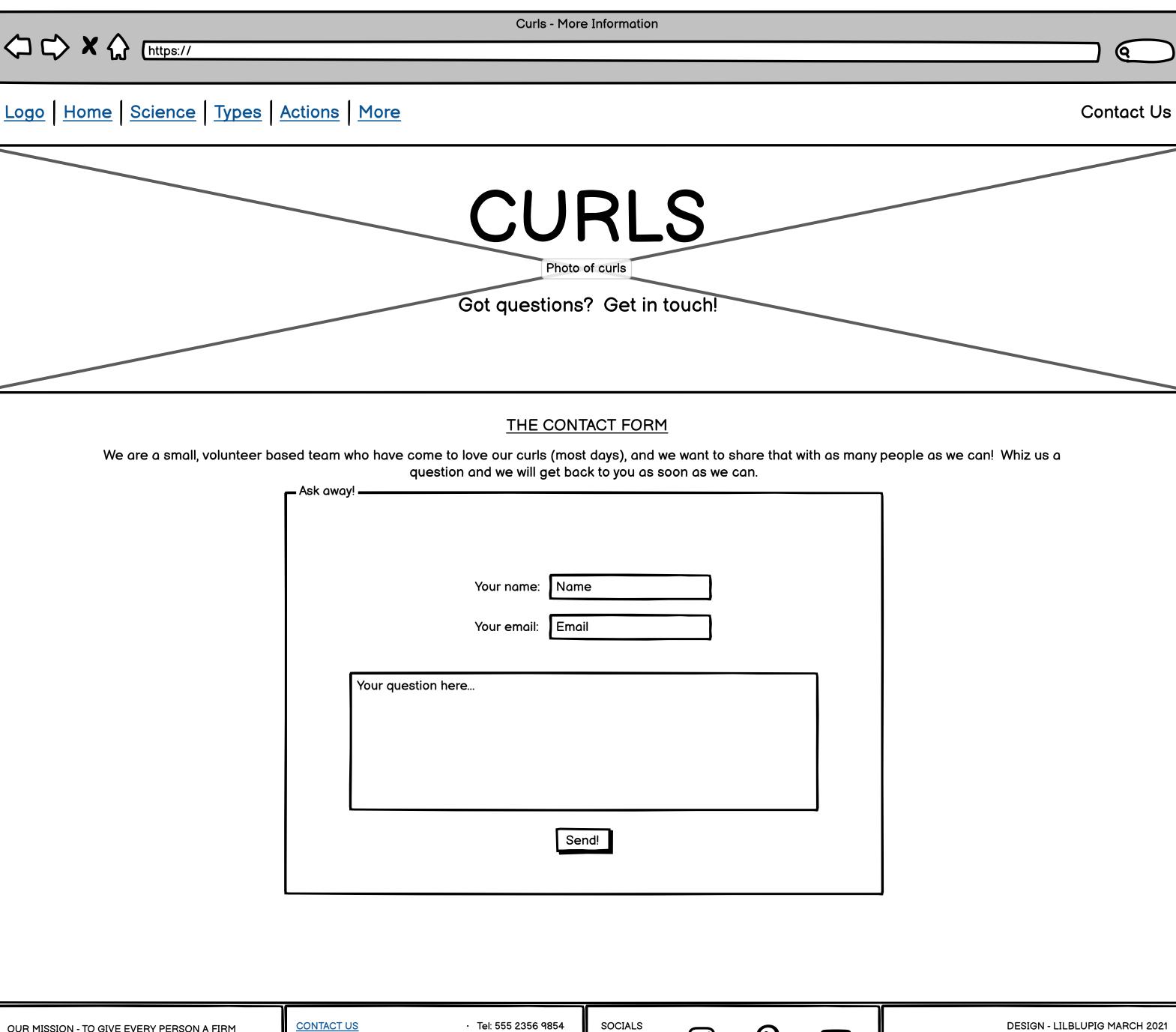
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