

## Recessionista Style: Extending the Life of Your Hair Color at Home

By **McLean Robbins** Published Thursday, May 14, 2009

Luxuries such as regular hair highlights are quick to fall by the wayside when your wallet is stretched tight between car payments, BlackBerry bills, and finagling just that little bit of extra cash for a weekend cocktail with friends.

In hopes of saving stylish Washingtonians from the dreaded mistake that is boxed hair color, we sat down with Boy Sharp, color specialist at **Bella Bethesda salon**, who offered several tips for extending the life of your color-treated hair.

“Having a professional dye your hair will give your hair color longevity and will leave it in better condition,” he says. “In the long run, you’ll get more bang for your buck.”

### **Stretching a Dollar**

When trying to stretch out treatments, it’s crucial to maintain moisture and use proper shampooing and conditioning products and techniques. Avoid products with sulfates, which can irritate the scalp, and try to shampoo less frequently because washing eliminates natural oils that coat your hair and protect the color. A shampoo every other day is enough for even the greasiest of hair, Sharp says. Phyto products are his personal favorite because they can be customized for every hair type.

“Treat your hair-care products like you would medication,” says Sharp. “They lose their potency after the printed expiration date, so throw them out.”

In the summer, use a hair-sunscreen product or wear a hat to prevent fading.

### **Do or Dye**

Sharp strongly recommends against dyeing your own hair for two reasons. The first and most obvious is that cheap isn’t always better. “It costs a lot more to fix a bad color than to do it right the first time,” he says. Next, salons rarely use only one color combination when dyeing hair and hardly ever use a simple single-process dye. Instead, they have hundreds of colors and thousands of combinations at their disposal, while the average grocery store has 20 or so options.

Those who insist on dyeing their own hair should try to find a relatively natural shade and apply it to “virgin hair” only, cautions Sharp. Dye is meant to adhere only to untreated hair and can damage and discolor already-dyed pieces. And never, ever allow the dye to touch the ends of hair: It’ll result in strange colorations on dry end pieces.

### **Shampoo 101**

Don’t skimp on the act of shampooing and conditioning either, he says. Wash your hair in lukewarm water, concentrating only on the roots. The suds will trickle down to the ends, but washing those directly can dry delicate hair. After washing, thoroughly rinse your hair and dry it with a towel before using conditioner. “Applying conditioner to sopping-wet hair doesn’t allow the moisturizer to penetrate into the hair follicles, which are already saturated with water,” says Sharp. Comb conditioner through with your fingers or a wide-tooth comb before rinsing. Gently towel-dry, and avoid heat styling whenever possible—it can fade delicate hair color, especially auburn shades. If you must heat-style, try a cooler setting than usual.

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