

Berna:

"My mom said everybody has different kinds of hair. Some people have straight hair, some people have curly hair, and some people have hair that is really, really curly. My dad said his hair is nappy. That means his hair is super-duper curly and that's why he keeps it cut real short. He looks very handsome to me."

Lula:

"My mom said that's just the way it is. We don't get to pick what kind of hair we have. The best thing to do is to take care of it, no matter what kind it is."



What Is Your Child's Hair Texture?

1



Before you try styling your child's hair, I want you to have a clear understanding of hair textures. Once you have figured out the texture of your child's hair, you can begin to use the right products, tools, and hair care techniques. You can then establish a routine for what I call "training the hair." It may take six

months to a year, but you will see a vast improvement in your child's hair, and maybe even in your child's attitude.

African American hair comes in different textures, which can be very confusing. But once you know how to care for your child's texture of hair, it becomes easy to work with. The textures can be classified into three categories: (1) kinky or excessively curly, (2) curly, and (3) wavy.

Your child's hair may be a combination of these textures or an extreme of one type, but the care of the hair will be based on these three categories. These textures also come in different thicknesses and lengths, which plays a major role in how you take care of your child's hair. Parents cannot predict the texture of their child's hair; it



LESS STRESS

When you're styling your child's hair, the right comb or brush can mean the difference between laughter and tears.

has its own special genetic design. Sometimes you will also notice that your child has a different hair color from your own, but even that often changes as your child grows. The most important factor is that you recognize if your child's hair texture is changing and take care of it accordingly.

Your child's natural hair texture changes extensively between infancy and the age of four. During this time your child's silky smooth hair may have turned into a curly afro. Or, as in many cases, your child may have come into this world with a little peach fuzz and for about eighteen months had very little or no hair. Then before you knew what happened, your child had so much hair it shocked you.

Hair goes through three stages—the sleep stage, the growth stage, and the shedding, or recycling, stage. As your child grows and you comb his or her hair, you will see hair in the comb—sometimes more and sometimes less. On some days you may see fifty to a hundred strands of hair. If you see excessive shedding, broken-off hair, or patches, it could mean there is a problem, and your child may need to see a dermatologist. Pay attention to the changes in your child's hair.

Many of your hair care techniques will depend not on the sex of your child but on your child's hair growth, on the texture of your child's hair, and on how the texture of the hair changes with age. What worked one year may not work the following year, and you may need to move to the next texture or age group. Let's look more closely at the different hair textures.

Kinky Hair

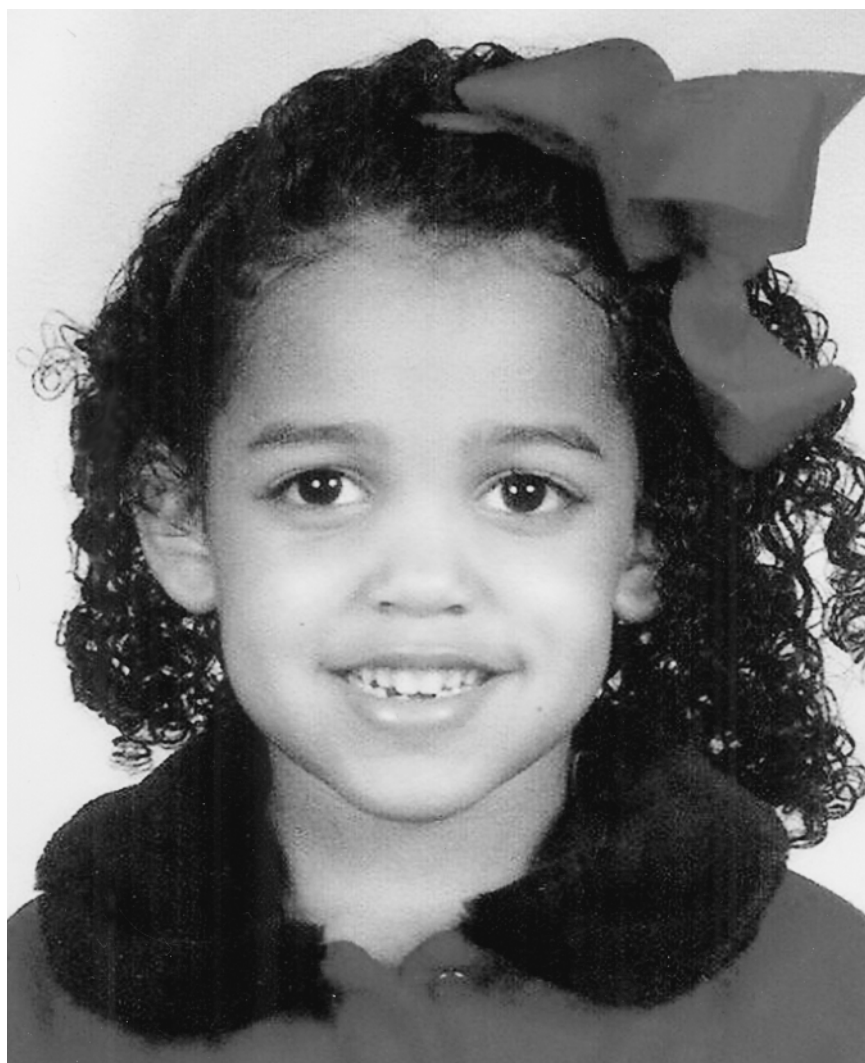
Kinky or excessively curly hair has a tight curl. It can be dry because of the tightness of the curl pattern. If you run your fingers down a strand of kinky hair, you will feel bumps on the strand that may have sharp angles to them like the letter Z. With the right tools and practice, this hair texture will give you many styling options.



Unfortunately, people think kinky or excessively curly hair is “bad hair.” It’s not. No natural hair texture is bad, only hair that is not taken care of properly. Our kinky hair was designed by the Creator to absorb the heat and to protect us from the elements, which was essential for many of our ancestors, who lived in hot climates and spent long periods of time outside in the sun.

Curly Hair

Curly hair has less spring to it than kinky hair. When you run your fingers down a strand of curly hair, you will feel curves on the strand. The curls in curly hair come in all forms—ringlets, circles, loops, or even spirals—and the hair itself may be thick or thin, fine, medium, or coarse. As your child grows, the curls may change from tight to loose or vice versa. Curly hair can be dry or oily, so how you take care of this texture of hair is very important. Curly hair can become difficult to handle if the wrong products or tools are used, or if you overhandle it by brushing or touching it too much.



Wavy Hair

If you take a strand of wavy hair and run your finger down it, the hair feels smooth. Wavy hair has a silky look and feel to it. When you pull on a strand it springs back into an “S” pattern. This type of hair is usually very soft, especially on infants; sometimes children of multicultural heritage have this hair texture. Caring for wavy hair in the early years is not that difficult, but as your child gets older his or her hair may become curlier or straighter; it all depends on your child's heritage and how the hair is cared for.



