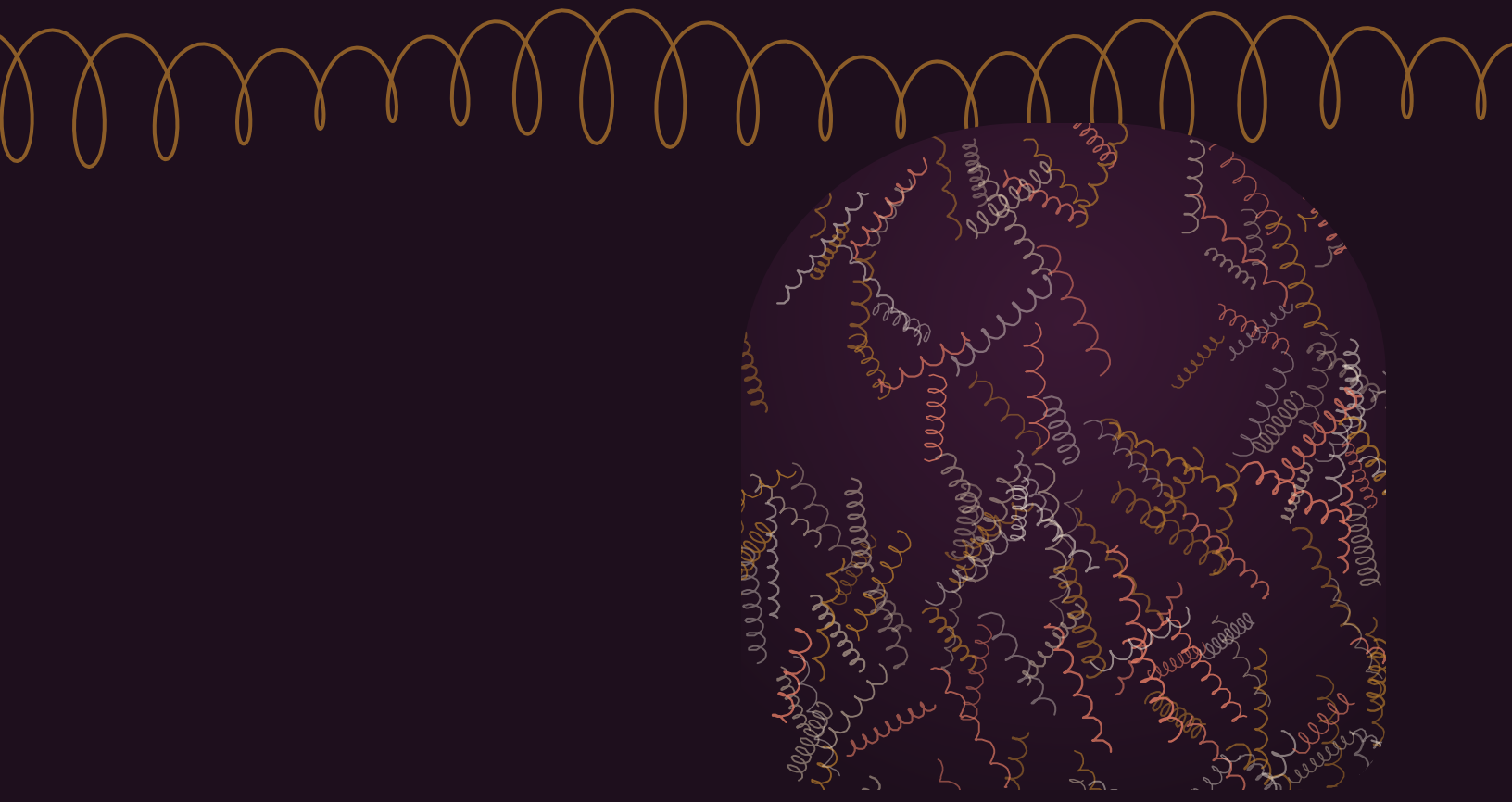
When life gets active

Move freely. Care for the hair afterward.

Practice, playground, pool. Let them move. Here’s the five-minute reset for afterward.



Go by the sweat, not the sport.

Soccer and dance can leave the same scalp drenched or dry. Look at what actually happened, light sweat, soaked roots or pool water, and follow that branch below.

Why, and the fine print

Light-sweat, heavy-sweat and water branches are practical decision aids. They aren't a validated sweat scale.

DECISION MAP

Pool, sweat or a wet head?

What to do with their hair after practice, the playground or the pool.

Q1 What just happened?

Light sweat · scalp feels fine

Blot it and let it breathe.
Blot the hairline, take off a damp headband, let the roots dry. Refresh only the section that needs it. No shampoo, no full detangle, no extra product.

The after-activity branches

Heavy sweat · roots are soaked

Q2 Is the scalp dirty, coated or itchy?

Yes

Wash tonight. Dry before bed.
Shampoo for the dirt and residue, then condition. Rinse well and plan drying time. Perfume, oil or dry shampoo only hide it.

The wash-day steps

No, just wet

Rinse, condition, dry.
A rinse-and-condition usually suits dry coily hair better than another shampoo. Squeeze, don't rub. Get the roots dry before they sleep.

The after-activity branches

Pool, lake or the beach

Run the pool-day reset.
Fresh-water rinse right away, braids stay in. Squeeze with a microfiber towel, then a clarifying or swimmer's shampoo and a deep conditioner at home. Dry fully before bed. Never rubbing alcohol.

The pool-day reset

Itching, sores or bumps showed up

Stop the style. Get it looked at.
Take down pulling styles and pause new products. Itching, sores or unusual loss that sticks around is not sweat or dryness by default. Book the pediatrician.

Notice → act → get help

Before they head out

01 **Pick a style that can move**
A loose braid, plaits, twists or a soft puff. Don't keep tightening the hairline to make it hold.

02 **Match the accessory to the sport**
A covered band or satin scrunchie that holds without pulling. Take out beads and clips, follow the team rules, and never change how a helmet fits to make room for hair.

03 **Skip the extra product**

No oil or gel coat needed before every game. Older kids can wear a clean sweatband if the sport allows it.

04 **Leave time for after**

Cool down, take off the damp band, check the scalp. For a child, a simple style after play is plenty.

Sources AAD · Hairstyles that pull can lead to hair loss

Choose the after-activity branch.

What happened	What to do	What not to do
Light sweat / comfortable scalp	Blot the hairline gently, remove a damp band, and let roots dry. Assess whether any section needs a small refresh.	Automatically shampoo, fully detangle, or add more product after every light session.
Heavy sweat / very damp roots	Rinse and condition when that suits dry coily hair; shampoo when dirt, oil, residue, or scalp needs call for cleansing. Rinse thoroughly and plan drying.	Use perfume, oil, or repeated dry shampoo to hide an uncomfortable scalp or postpone needed washing.
Swimming / pool or salt water	Rinse with fresh water right away, braids stay in. Squeeze with a microfiber towel, then at home wash with a gentle clarifying or swimmer's shampoo and deep condition. Dry fully before bed (full steps below).	Use rubbing alcohol on hair or scalp—ever. Sleep on soaking-wet braids.
Irritation, sores, or unusual loss	Stop pulling styles or irritating products and obtain appropriate assessment.	Treat persistent symptoms as sweat or dryness by default.

Sources AAD · How often do children need to wash their hair? · AAD · Teaching your child healthy hair care habits

Age changes the wash rule.

The dermatology washing chart is written for ages 8–12: dry, curly hair about every 7–10 days, plus a rinse and condition after heavy sweating or swimming. For a toddler, go by how the scalp feels and how dirty it got, and ask your pediatrician if you're unsure.

Why, and the fine print

AAD's rinse-and-condition guidance is kept here as advice for that age group. We don't convert it into a toddler timetable.

Sources AAD · How often do children need to wash their hair?

Adjust for how they wear it

Loose natural

Choose a style that tolerates movement. After drying, reshape just the sections that need it. A gel refresh is optional, not a second wash day.

Silk press or blowout

A loose wrap helps, but sweat brings texture back. Dry the roots, never flat-iron damp hair, and skip the daily hot touch-ups. A simpler style is fine.

Relaxed or texturized

Be extra gentle where new growth meets processed hair. No heavy tension plus repeated heat to keep a gym style sleek.

Locs

No tight or heavy bun. Give wet locs time to dry all the way through. In the starter stage, get a wash plan from your loctician rather than skipping washes.

Sources AAD · Hairstyles that pull can lead to hair loss · Sisterlocks · Sisterlocks are resilient

What we take from MoKnowsHair

MoKnowsHair's written regimen is weekly: a scalp clarifier, a deep conditioning treatment she calls "the key element" of keeping her length, detangling while the conditioner is in, then stylers on wet hair and a hooded dryer. For workouts she loops her hair into a loose scrunchie bun with a stretchy satin scarf around the hairline, then dries the roots afterward.

We follow the same logic for kids: clean scalp, deep condition, contain the hair comfortably for sports, and always have a drying plan. We leave out the edge gel, the scarf during kids' games and blow-drying toddlers.

Why, and the fine print

That's an adult educator's routine with her own product line, not a tested child-health plan. We reviewed the written page in full; the linked video wasn't watched end to end.

Sources MoKnowsHair · My length retention regimen + tips

The pool-day reset

Before: fill the hair with clean water and leave-in so it has less room for chlorine. After: rinse, wash, deep condition, dry. Rubbing alcohol is never part of it.

01 **Pre-saturate before the pool**

Wet the hair with clean water, then work in leave-in conditioner or a light oil. Dermatologists recommend this: hair already full of clean water absorbs less pool water.

02 **Style it for the cap**

Two puffs, pigtails, a single braid or a low ponytail compress under a cap and bounce back. Wash-and-go and twist-outs get crushed.

03

Layer the cap

A kid-sized satin bonnet goes on first, then a silicone swim cap over it. The satin cuts friction frizz; the silicone keeps most of the pool out. Save the double layer for lessons and parties if it is a struggle.

04

Rinse immediately afterward

Shower, hose or a water bottle at the pool. Get the chlorine out before it dries in. With braids, rinse through them with your fingers; don't take them down wet.

05

Wash and deep condition at home

Squeeze (never wring) with a microfiber towel or T-shirt. Then a gentle clarifying or swimmer's shampoo to lift the chlorine, and a deep conditioner to put the moisture back. That's the dermatologist-recommended order.

06

Optional: a mild vinegar rinse

Only if you like it: 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar in 1 cup of cool water, poured through after conditioning and rinsed out. Keep it out of their eyes and skip it on irritated skin. Leave tea tree and lavender out of the kids' routine.

07

Dry fully before bed

Hooded dryer on cool/low for 30–60 minutes, or a diffuser on cool 8–10 inches away. Hair that stays damp inside braids overnight can smell musty and irritate the scalp, so the answer is drying, not alcohol. Then re-mist and redo the puffs: a pool day is a two-style day.

Sources AAD · Must-try summer hair care · Cleveland Clinic · How to protect your hair from chlorine · Nebraska Medicine · Is apple cider vinegar good for your skin and hair? A dermatologist weighs in · Miche Beauty · How to protect your child's curls in the summer months · NIH · Lavender and tea tree oils may cause breast growth in boys

The reset: one clarifier, one deep conditioner

Pick one shampoo for what happened and one deep conditioner for their age. That's the whole reset; you don't need a different mask for every activity.

SWIM SHAMPOO · LITTLE KIDS

Fairy Tales Lifeguard Sun & Swim Clarifying Shampoo

A kids' swim clarifier for after the pool. Sulfate-free, scented, no tea tree or lavender on the label.

See it on Amazon

SWIM SHAMPOO · POOL BAG

SoCozy Kids Swim 3-in-1

Shampoo, conditioner and body wash in one bottle for the pool shower. Still deep condition at home.

Search on Amazon

CLARIFIER · GEL & PRODUCT BUILDUP

4U by Tia Clarifying Shampoo

For gel weeks and dull, coated hair. Sulfate-free, with vinegar. Every few weeks, not every wash.

Search on Amazon

DEEP CONDITIONER · TODDLERS

SheaMoisture Baby Nighttime Deep Conditioner

Shea butter and honey, protein-free. The “lavender” is the scent; no lavender oil is listed.

Search on Amazon

DEEP CONDITIONER · BIGGER KIDS

TGIN Honey Miracle Hair Mask

Honey and olive oil with real slip for dense, knotty hair. Scented; protein-free.

Search on Amazon

Store links are for convenience; we haven’t tested every item, and prices change. Check the current listing before you buy.

Why, and the fine print

Young kids don’t need protein treatments. Stick with a moisturizing deep conditioner unless a stylist or dermatologist points to a specific problem.

Masks with peppermint oil, like Camille Rose Algae Renew, are for older kids. Federal health guidance says peppermint oil shouldn’t go on the faces of infants or young children, and conditioner runs down the face at rinse time.

Clarifying shampoos, swim shampoos included, are for buildup days. Used every wash, they leave coily hair dry.

Sources Fairy Tales · Lifeguard Sun & Swim Clarifying Shampoo (Target listing) · SoCozy · Kids Swim 3-in-1 (H-E-B listing) · Skinsort · 4U by Tia Clarifying Shampoo ingredients · Vitacost · SheaMoisture Baby Nighttime Deep Conditioner ingredients · Skinsort · TGIN Honey Miracle Hair Mask ingredients · Skinsort · Camille Rose Algae Renew ingredients · NCCIH · Peppermint oil: science and safety

Supporting sources

Checked October 26, 2026. Source roles and limitations are part of these instructions.

AAD · Hairstyles that pull can lead to hair loss · Date not displayed
https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/hair-loss/causes/hairstyles
Tension and early warning signs apply across hairstyles. A professional installation does not remove traction risk.

AAD · How often do children need to wash their hair? · Updated November 14, 2023
https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/hair-scalp-care/hair/wash-hair
Explicitly written for ages 8–12. Its heavy-sweat advice must not be presented as a tested toddler schedule.

AAD · Teaching your child healthy hair care habits · Date not displayed
https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/hair-scalp-care/hair/hair-care-habits
Child-focused gentle handling and swimming guidance; not a trial of this family routine.

Sisterlocks · Sisterlocks are resilient · March 24, 2020
https://www.sisterlocks.com/blog/sisterlocks-are-resilient
Written in the context of delayed appointments. Useful for cleansing, separation, and consultant support; not a universal maintenance calendar.

MoKnowsHair · My length retention regimen + tips · August 8, 2024
https://moknowshair.com/blogs/news/lengthretentionregimen
Read in full on October 27, 2026: weekly wash day, scalp clarifier, deep conditioning as “the key element” (extra time with heat for low porosity), detangling with conditioner and a flexible brush, stylers on wet hair, hooded dryer, enclosed pineapple at night, trims about every four months, heat cut to about twice a year. Adult routine with her own product line; not pediatric clinical evidence.

AAD · Must-try summer hair care · Date not displayed
https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/hair-scalp-care/hair/summer-hair-care
Leave-in or oil before the pool, swim cap, rinse immediately, swimmer’s shampoo, then deep conditioner.

Cleveland Clinic · How to protect your hair from chlorine · Date not displayed
https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-protect-your-hair-from-chlorine
Dermatologist: saturate hair with clean water first, add leave-in or oil, wear a cap, rinse right away, clarify occasionally (not daily), deep condition weekly.

Nebraska Medicine · Is apple cider vinegar good for your skin and hair? A dermatologist weighs in · Date not displayed
https://nebraskamed.com/node/25651
Start at about ½ tablespoon ACV per 8 oz water; never use it straight; stop if irritated; skip on skin conditions; patch test first.

Miche Beauty · How to protect your child’s curls in the summer months · Date not displayed
https://www.michebeauty.com/blogs/the-miche-manual-blog/how-to-protect-your-child-s-curls-in-the-summer-months
Cap or scarf for swimming, gentle non-stripping shampoo, deep conditioning, leave-in, low-tension protective styles.

NIH · Lavender and tea tree oils may cause breast growth in boys · February 1, 2007
https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/lavender-tea-tree-oils-may-cause-breast-growth-boys
Case reports in prepubertal boys linked to topical products with lavender or tea tree oil; growth resolved after stopping. Basis for keeping essential oils out of the kids’ routine.

Fairy Tales · Lifeguard Sun & Swim Clarifying Shampoo (Target listing) · Date not displayed
https://www.target.com/p/fairy-tales-lifeguard-sun-swim-clarifying-shampoo-12-fl-oz/-/A-15425265
Sulfate-free kids’ swim clarifier made to lift chlorine, salt and minerals, per the maker. Contains fragrance and grapefruit peel oil; no tea tree, lavender or rosemary listed.

SoCozy · Kids Swim 3-in-1 (H-E-B listing) · Date not displayed
https://www.heb.com/product-detail/socozy-kids-swim-3-in-1-shampoo-conditioner-wash-10-5-oz/6514551
Kids’ swim shampoo, conditioner and body wash with charcoal; sulfate-free per the maker. Contains fragrance and small amounts of hydrolyzed vegetable and rice protein.

Skinsort · 4U by Tia Clarifying Shampoo ingredients · Date not displayed
https://skinsort.com/products/4u-by-tia/clarifying-shampoo
Sulfate-free taurate/isethionate cleansers, vinegar (acetum), neem extracts, fragrance. No tea tree, lavender, peppermint or rosemary listed. Adult brand made for 3A–4C hair.

Vitacost · SheaMoisture Baby Nighttime Deep Conditioner ingredients · Date not displayed
https://www.vitacost.com/products/sheamoisture-baby-nighttime-deep-conditioner-manuka-honey-lavender-12-fl-oz-340-ml-125915
Shea butter, honey, almond and olive oils, conditioning agents, fragrance. No lavender oil, other essential oils or hydrolyzed protein listed; the “lavender” is the scent.

Skinsort · TGIN Honey Miracle Hair Mask ingredients · Date not displayed
https://skinsort.com/products/tgin/honey-miracle-hair-mask
Honey, olive and jojoba oils, aloe, conditioning agents, fragrance, MI/MCI preservative. No essential oils or hydrolyzed protein listed.

Skinsort · Camille Rose Algae Renew ingredients · Date not displayed
https://skinsort.com/products/camille-rose/algae-renew-deep-conditioning-mask
Butters, plant oils, algae, biotin and peppermint oil (Mentha piperita). Not hydrolyzed protein.

NCCIH · Peppermint oil: science and safety · Date not displayed
https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNIHNCCIH/bulletins/37e0f98
“Peppermint oil should not be applied to the faces of infants or young children” because inhaled menthol can cause serious side effects. Basis for keeping peppermint-oil masks for older kids.

Keep the routine close.

This guide lives online too, with every path, the full kit and the sources behind each step. Scan to open it on your phone.

thedadsystem.org/haircare/activity.html

The Dad System · Small systems. Deeper connection. General education, not medical advice; this guide has not been medically reviewed. Artwork is original and generated in code.