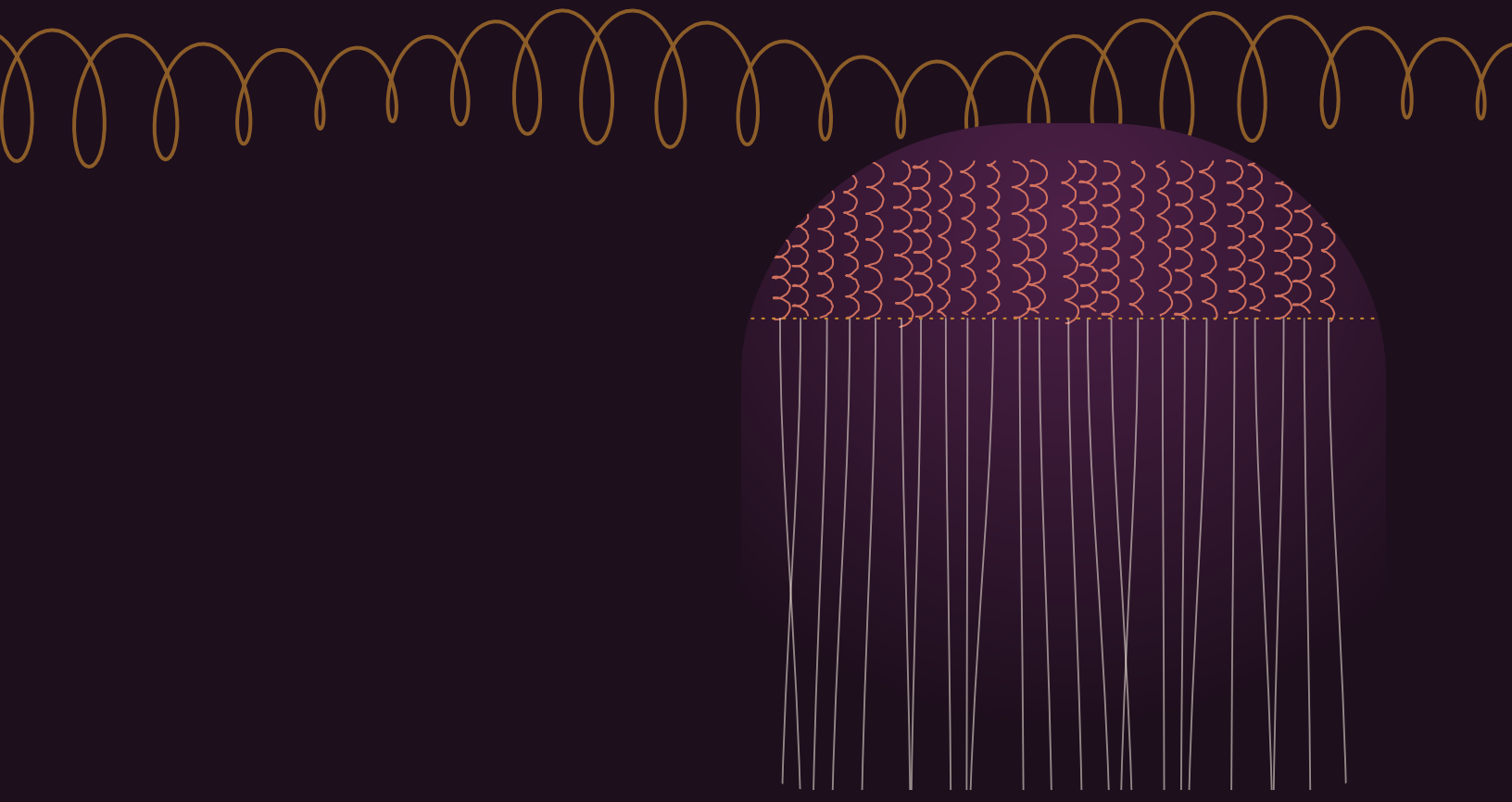
Choose your path

# Informed choices. No risk-free promises.

Relaxers, texturizers, perms and smoothing treatments, explained one by one. This is how to have the consultation, not a recipe for doing it at home.



## Not for toddlers. Full stop.

This system doesn’t recommend chemical straightening for toddlers. You won’t find a “safe age” or processing times here.

**Why, and the fine print**

A professional reduces some avoidable risks. It doesn’t make any chemical service risk-free.

DECISION MAP

# Thinking about a relaxer or chemical service?

Get the name of the service, the history and the stop rule straight before anyone books.

**Q1** Who is it for?

**A toddler**

**Not part of the toddler routine.**

This system doesn't recommend elective chemical straightening for toddlers and won't invent a "safe age." Stay with natural care.

Where we draw the line

**An older child or teen**

**Q2** Do you know the exact service, like relaxer, texturizer, keratin or color?

**Not yet**

**Name the service first.**

Relaxer, texturizer, smoothing and color are different chemicals with different risks. Find out exactly what's being offered before deciding.

Name the service precisely

**Yes**

**Q3** Any sores, irritation or a recent chemical service on the scalp?

**Yes**

**Wait, and get it assessed.**

Nothing gets processed over irritated or injured skin. Let it heal and ask a clinician if it's not clearing.

Scalp: notice → act

**No**

**Run the consult checklist.**

Tell them the full history, have the scalp assessed, ask for the product and its warnings, no overlapping, and agree on the stop rule: burning means stop.

Before any chemical service

Me / an adult

**Q4** Do you know the exact service, like relaxer, texturizer, keratin or color?

Not yet

**Name the service first.**

Relaxer, texturizer, smoothing and color are different chemicals with different risks. Find out exactly what's being offered before deciding.

**Name the service precisely**

Yes

**Q5** Any sores, irritation or a recent chemical service on the scalp?

Yes

**Wait, and get it assessed.**

Nothing gets processed over irritated or injured skin. Let it heal and ask a clinician if it's not clearing.

**Scalp: notice → act**

No

**Run the consult checklist.**

Tell them the full history, have the scalp assessed, ask for the product and its warnings, no overlapping, and agree on the stop rule: burning means stop.

**Before any chemical service**

## Know exactly what's being offered.

| Service | What it does | Don't be fooled by |
|---|---|---|
| **Relaxer** | Permanently straightens the hair it touches. There are different chemical systems. | "No-lye." It's still a chemical, and it can still burn and break hair. |
| **Texturizer** | Chemically loosens the curl without fully straightening it. | Calling it a conditioner or a curl cream. It's permanent. |
| **Curl perm / permanent wave** | Chemically creates or reshapes curls or waves. | The word "perm." People use it for relaxers too. Ask what chemical, and what result. |
| **Smoothing / keratin service** | A product plus heat. Formulas vary a lot. | "Same as a relaxer." It isn't. Some of these products release formaldehyde when heated. |

**Sources** Society for Pediatric Dermatology · Curly/coily hair care · FDA · Hair smoothing products that release formaldehyde when heated

## Before any chemical service

01 **Give the full history**
Dates and exact products for relaxers, texturizers, bleach, permanent color, perms and smoothing. Plus scalp conditions, sores, allergies, past burns and any breakage now.

02 **Get the scalp and hair checked**
Nothing gets processed over irritated or broken skin. Ask them to look at fragile spots and past processing, not just how straight you want it.

03 **Ask for the product and its warnings**
Know the formula and any testing it requires. A skin allergy test and a strand test answer different questions, and neither guarantees no reaction.

04 **No overlap, no mixing**
A touch-up stays on new growth, not the hair that's already relaxed. Don't stack chemical systems because a video said the timing works.

05 **Agree on the stop rule**
Burning isn't the product "working." Stop, rinse as the product directs, and get medical help for any injury.

**Sources** AAD · Black hair: tips for everyday care · FDA · Hair smoothing products that release formaldehyde when heated

## Aftercare and growing it out

Gentle cleansing and conditioning, careful detangling, low-tension styles. Go easy on extra heat. Add a treatment only for a specific problem. "Protein balance" isn't a reason to buy four repair products.

Relaxed hair never goes back to natural. You grow out new hair, handle the two textures gently where they meet, and trim on your own timeline. A big chop is an option, not a requirement.

Keep a service log and check the hair before every appointment. A calendar reminder isn't a reason to relax again.

**Sources** Society for Pediatric Dermatology · Curly/coily hair care · AAD · Black hair: tips for everyday care

## What the health research says

An NIH study of adult women found that frequent use of hair straighteners was linked to higher uterine cancer rates. Linked, not proven. It can’t tell you which product or ingredient, or your own risk, and it says nothing safe about childhood use.

The FDA warns that some heated smoothing products release formaldehyde. A federal ban on formaldehyde in these products has been planned for years and, as of this edition, still isn’t in effect; the FDA’s agenda lists a proposed rule for November 2026. So ask to see the ingredients and safety information, ask about ventilation, and don’t take “formaldehyde-free” or “natural” on faith.

**Sources** NIH · Hair straightening chemicals associated with higher uterine cancer risk · FDA · Hair smoothing products that release formaldehyde when heated · ChemLinked · US FDA sets November 2026 timeline for formaldehyde ban

### If there’s a reaction

Burns, blistering, a chemical in the eye or serious pain: get care right away. Trouble breathing or a severe allergic reaction: call 911. Don’t try to neutralize a skin injury with vinegar, lemon or another product.

# Supporting sources

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

**Society for Pediatric Dermatology · Curly/coily hair care** · Published 2021
https://pedsderm.net/site/assets/files/1028/spd_edi_curly-coily-hair_bw_pub.pdf
Two-page specialty handout, read including both page images. Includes broad care suggestions, not evidence that a precise heat temperature or routine is risk-free.

**FDA · Hair smoothing products that release formaldehyde when heated** · Date not displayed
https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetic-products/hair-smoothing-products-release-formaldehyde-when-heated
Some heated smoothing products release formaldehyde. This is not a statement that every relaxer or every smoothing product has the same formula.

**AAD · Black hair: tips for everyday care** · Date not displayed
https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/hair-scalp-care/hair/care-african-american
General Black-hair guidance, not a toddler-specific trial or a universal schedule.

**NIH · Hair straightening chemicals associated with higher uterine cancer risk** · October 17, 2022
https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/hair-straightening-chemicals-associated-higher-uterine-cancer-risk
Observational adult Sister Study finding; association is not causation and does not identify the risk of a specific product or an individual child.

**ChemLinked · US FDA sets November 2026 timeline for formaldehyde ban** · July 2026
https://cosmetic.chemlinked.com/news/cosmetic-news/us-fda-sets-november-2026-timeline-for-formaldehyde-ban-and-fragrance-allergen-rule
FDA's regulatory agenda lists a proposed rule to ban formaldehyde and formaldehyde-releasers in heated smoothing/straightening products, planned for November 2026. Not in effect as of this edition.

# 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/chemical.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.