Decision maps

Hair decisions, mapped.

Six one-glance flowcharts: pool days, scalp worries, too-tight styles, heat, chemical services and LOC vs LCO.



A map, not a diagnosis.

These flowcharts turn the guide into quick next steps. They don't replace a clinician. Anything that worries you, or doesn't get better, is a reason to call the pediatrician.

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

DECISION MAP

Something's off with the scalp.

Start with what is urgent, then narrow down who can actually help.

Q1 Any trouble breathing, facial swelling, a chemical in the eye or a serious burn?

Yes

Get emergency help now.
Call 911 or go to the ER. Do not try a home remedy or a wash-day experiment first.

No

Q2 Spreading painful redness, fever, pus, or a tender swollen scalp?

Yes

Get it assessed today.
Call the pediatrician or urgent care today. This needs a clinician, not another product.

When it's urgent

No

Q3 What are you seeing?

Pain, bumps or raised skin after styling

Loosen or take the style down.
Do it today. Don't wait for it to "settle." A skilled stylist can adjust the technique; if bumps or soreness last, see a clinician.

Notice → act → get help

Itch, flakes or scratching at night that won't quit

Pause new products. Book the pediatrician.
Stop the last thing you added and don't keep layering oil. Persistent itch or scale needs a pediatrician or dermatologist to say what it is.

What to bring to the appointment

A bald patch, broken hairs or thinning edges

Less tension. Early appointment.
Don't hide the area under a tighter style or share combs. A dermatologist needs to tell infection, inflammation and traction apart.

Notice → act → get help

Tangles and frayed ends, scalp is fine

It's handling, not the scalp.
Look at how you detangle, the style and the takedown. A textured-hair professional can help with trimming or bad matting.

Morning, night & takedown

DECISION MAP

Is this style too tight?

Check this after every install, and again the next morning.

Q1 Any wincing, headache, bumps or sore spots at the base?

Yes

Take it down or loosen it today.
Pain is the signal, not the price of a neat style. Redo it bigger and looser.
Notice → act → get help

No

Q2 Is the skin at the roots tented, shiny or pulled up?

Yes

Loosen the sections that pull.
Release the tightest parts first, usually the edges and nape. Next install, use fewer and larger sections.
The practice ladder

No

Q3 Do the same edges or ponytail spot take the tension every week?

Yes

Rotate the stress points.
Move the part, change the anchor, alternate puffs with loose twists. The edges need weeks off.
Low-tension finishes

No

Q4 Did they ask to stop or say it hurts during the session?

Yes

“Pause” means pause.
Hands off, then let them choose: finish later, go bigger, or call it done. Trust is the whole routine.
The Thairapy ritual

No

Comfortable. Keep it.
Check the hairline again tomorrow morning and take it down on schedule.
Morning, night & takedown

DECISION MAP

Should we use heat?

A decision before a temperature. The answer is often “not yet.”

Q1 How old are they?

Under 3

No heat yet.
Air dry, or use a RevAir on its cool (O) setting to dry and stretch. Twists, plaits and puffs need no heat at all.

RevAir with kids

About 3 to 7

Low-heat drying only.
A RevAir on low heat (I, about 158°F) and low tension, short sessions, with ear protection. No flat irons or silk presses at this age.

The kid settings

8 and up, teen or adult

Q2 Any breaking, a sore scalp, or chemical history you’re unsure of?

Yes

Postpone the heat.
Sort out the breakage or the scalp first, and get the chemical history clear. Heat on fragile or processed hair is where damage starts.

Why the decision comes first

No

Q3 Can they sit still safely and tell you “stop”?

Yes

Occasional heat, done carefully.
Clean, conditioned hair. A heat protectant made for that tool. Lowest effective setting, no repeated passes. Stop at burning, smoke or pain.

The occasional heat route

Not really

Not today.
If they can’t stay put or speak up, the appliance waits. Choose a stretched no-heat style.

No-heat finishes

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

DECISION MAP

LOC or LCO?

How their hair acts after wash day tells you which order to use: liquid, oil and cream.

Q1 **After wash day, how does their hair act?**

A feel test, not a lab result. Skip the glass-of-water float test; it measures surface oil, not porosity.

Soaks up water fast, dries fast, frizzes easily

Higher porosity → LOC.

Liquid (water + leave-in), then Oil (jojoba or JBCO) to seal, then Cream to finish. Hair that drinks fast loses moisture fast, so seal it.

The daily spray bottle

Water beads up, slow to soak in, products sit on top

Low porosity → LCO.

Liquid, then Cream, then a light Oil. Use less product, and a warm cap while you deep condition helps it soak in.

The daily spray bottle

Somewhere in between

Start with LCO, lightly.

Start with LCO and small amounts. Watch the next day: dry and crunchy means more liquid; greasy or coated means less oil.

The useful science

DECISION MAP

Is today a good day to do edges?

Check the hairline first, then pick the routine for their age.

Q1 Any thinning, bumps, broken hairs or soreness along the hairline?

Yes

Give the edges a rest.
Skip edge styling, loosen anything pulling at the hairline, and wear a loose style for now. If it doesn't improve, see the pediatrician or a dermatologist.

Scalp: notice → act

No

Q2 How old are they?

1–5

Fingertips, cream, satin band.
Mist, a pea-size dab of soft cream, smooth with bare fingertips, then a loose satin band for 5–10 minutes. No brushes, no gel.

Ages 1–5 routine

6–12

Wipe, light gel, soft brush.
Damp-cloth wipe, a little alcohol-free gel, a soft boar-bristle brush, then a satin band for 10 minutes.

Ages 6–12 routine

13+

Damp, firm gel, scarf.
Dampen, a small amount of firm gel, shape with a fine comb, satin scarf for 10–15 minutes, then a drop of oil. Snug, never tight.

Ages 13+ routine

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/decide.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.