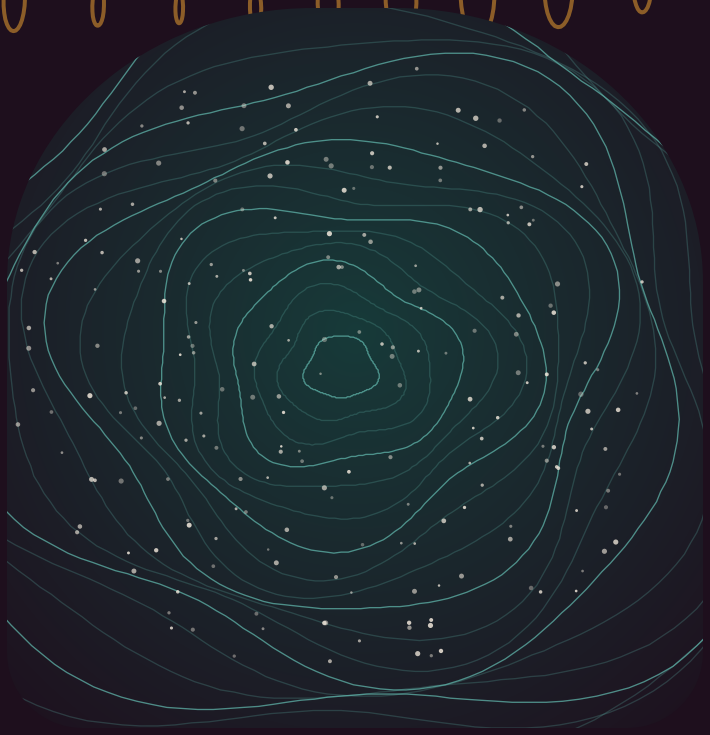
When something feels wrong

Not every problem is dryness.

When to simplify, when to take a style down, and when it's time for a doctor instead of another product.



Emergencies first.

Trouble breathing, a swelling face, a chemical in the eye or a serious burn: call 911 or go to the ER. Spreading painful redness, fever, pus or a tender, swollen scalp: get seen today. Don't try a home fix first.

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

What you see → what to do → who helps

What you see	Do this first	Who can help
Pulling, pain, bumps or raised skin after styling	Loosen it or take it down today. Don't wait for it to "settle."	A skilled stylist can fix the technique. If it lasts, or there's hair loss, see a clinician.
An itch, flakes, sores or scratching at night that won't quit	Stop the newest product and any experiments. Don't keep adding oil.	Kids: pediatrician or dermatologist. Adults: dermatologist or primary care.
A bald patch, broken hairs or a tender, scaly spot	Don't guess from a photo, and don't share combs. Get it checked.	A clinician, who can tell infection, inflammation and tension damage apart.
Thinning edges, a widening part or crown changes	Less tension now, and an early appointment. Don't cover it with a tighter style.	A dermatologist. A loctician or stylist can't diagnose scalp disease.
Tangles and frayed ends, but the scalp is fine	Look at how you detangle, the style and the takedown.	A textured-hair stylist for trims or bad matting.

Sources AAD · Hairstyles that pull can lead to hair loss · AAD · Black hair: tips for everyday care

Skip the internet diagnosis

You can't tell dry scalp from dandruff, eczema, infection or a product reaction by the color of the flakes. A bald patch isn't automatically ringworm. Never give a toddler an adult medicated product because of a photo or an influencer's routine.

Conditioner can make hair feel and handle better. That doesn't mean the breakage was "lack of moisture." Unusual or lasting hair loss needs a checkup, not a protein treatment or a growth oil.

Jot down when it started, any new products or services, tight styles, and whether it hurts. Bring the product labels and photos. That helps the appointment. It isn't a diagnosis.

What to bring to the appointment

- [ ] When it started, and whether it’s spreading
- [ ] Itching, pain, flakes, oozing, or trouble sleeping
- [ ] Exact products, ingredients and recent services
- [ ] Hairstyles, and any change in tension
- [ ] What you tried, and whether it helped or made it worse

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 · 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.

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/scalp.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.