

HERB STOP

August 09 Highlight



Want To Color your Hair And Body With Henna?

Henna is a plant with a rich and varied history. No one knows for sure where or when it was first used. However, records dating back more than 5,000 years specify its use as medicine, ceremonial substance, and cosmetic used to color hair and paint the body. Originally found in North Africa, Australia, and Asia, henna has spread and naturalized in many areas of the world, including in the United States. Henna has a long list of medicinal properties and is still used in many parts of the world as an astringent for headaches, a gargle for sore throats, and to treat stomach upset and pain. But mostly today, henna is being used to dye and condition hair, or to enhance one's own natural hair color. The term for describing henna-treated hair is "henna lights", as it truly does highlight the hair.

Henna is also being used to paint designs upon the body, traditionally the palms and soles, for the purposes of beauty and spiritual benefit. The art of henna painting, also known as mendhi, has become fashionable worldwide and for good reason. Besides its beauty, henna is safe, temporary and painless. The dye, which is permanent on fabric or wood, lingers anywhere from 2-12 weeks on the skin. Many state-of-the-art spas throughout the country use henna as a natural skin tanning agent. After such a treatment the skin looks slightly tanned, giving it a glow. The skin also feels cooler, perfect for weathering our hot summers.

Henna For The Hair

This is a basic recipe for creating natural hair dye. Take this one and experiment.

2 oz of henna (choose a color of your choice)
2 cups boiling water and 2 tbsp vinegar (red wine vinegar for red hair, balsamic for black, apple cider for light, etc.)
½ -1 lemon juiced

Mix henna with vinegar, add color ingredient of your choice, and lemon juice. Add enough boiling water to make a paste.

Blonde Hair

Blonde henna can be used to condition blond hair, but it will often darken it a bit. Blonde henna will not make your hair lighter or "blonder", it does not contain bleaches and therefore will not strip the hair of its natural color.

Dark Blonde To Light Brown Hair

If you want to highlight your own color, choose a shade that best describes your own hair. For example, if you have dark blonde hair use blonde henna. If you have light brown hair use light brown henna.

Medium Brown To Dark Brown Hair

With these shades you can do more than you can with the lighter shades of color. Look at the hair to determine the natural highlights, and select a shade of henna that accentuates the natural color.

Dark Brown To Black Hair

Adding shades of red henna to dark brown hair can be stunning. Dark brown hair blends beautifully with red henna to create rich auburns, fiery copper tones and many other stunning colors. Many shades of red henna are available, such as burgundy and wine. Black hair is similar to blond hair from a henna point of view. It adds very little coloring, but it does condition and adds body.

White Or Grey Hair

Coloring white or grey hair with henna is not recommended as it turns them bright orange. If you insist you may try neutral or light brown henna, leaving it on only about 30 minutes.

Henna For The Body

This is a basic recipe for creating mendhi paste. Take this one and experiment: you can add espresso coffee, blue or black malva, rose petals, safflower, or hibiscus flowers.

One teaspoon henna powder
Two teaspoons strong black tea or coffee
5 drops of essential oils of clove and eucalyptus

In a glass bowl mix all ingredients stirring in one direction to dissolve lumps. The texture should be akin to toothpaste: add extra powder or liquid, a little at a time, to achieve this consistency. Once the paste is smooth, cover the bowl with a towel and let it sit overnight in a warm place before using.

The next day draw your chosen design with a stencil on the body. There is a variety of classical mendhi designs and styles to choose from and that come to us from different regions of the world. For example, Bedouins tend to create stark, solid blocks of color while in India very elaborate and intricate forms are favored. Berber designs are characterized by a bold geometry. Middle Eastern designs tend to be delicately geometric and floral but the palm of the hand is not quite so "filled-up" as is favored in India or Pakistan.

Henna's Other Uses

Henna may also be used to condition the nails. Henna stains nails with a deep color that may remain for months, only growing out with the nail. If you are handling henna and do not wish to stain your nails, wearing nail polish may protect them. On the other hand, some, like those ancient pharaohs, may appreciate the benefits of a henna manicure: it doesn't chip, needs little maintenance and henna improves the health and quality of the nails. Make a henna paste, then spread a small lump evenly onto each nail, allow it to sit for a while and voila: your henna manicure.

I don't like wearing lipstick, as I do not wish to eat all the chemicals in them. To add a little color to my lips, on occasion, I color them with red henna. I let the paste sit all night long. Henna gives the lips a deep natural color for a few days. After the henna treatment, I use natural lip gloss to bring out the color.

How To Henna Your Hair

- ✿ A henna application takes a little know-how and practice. If you don't want to apply henna yourself, as it can be a little messy the first few times, you may want to go to a spa, get pampered and have your hair colored and your skin tanned with henna. If you decide to do it yourself at home, get some friends together, have a henna party, and have some fun. Here are some instructions on the application of henna on hair:
- ✿ It is not necessary to wash your hair before a henna treatment.
- ✿ Mix the henna with the water until it is smooth and creamy.
- ✿ Dampen your hair.
- ✿ Put on plastic gloves, if you don't want henna hands for two weeks.
- ✿ Massage a little jojoba oil into the hair, especially the ends.
- ✿ Cover hair completely with the henna paste by sectioning the hair and then cover with a plastic bag or shower cap.
- ✿ To hold it all together, wrap it with an old towel.
- ✿ Leave the henna on for about two hours. Wash your hair just one time with shampoo. If you like to use a conditioner or detangler, you can do so.
- ✿ If there is still some henna left in your hair, don't worry. Just let your hair dry naturally and brush it out.
- ✿ To fully appreciate the beautiful highlights of the henna, you must let the hair dry completely.
- ✿ Henna does not leave roots, as the color will fade considerably after one or two washings. It then fixes itself and over two or three months gradually fades away.

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