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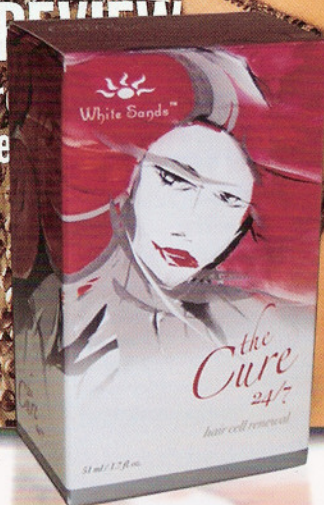
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Split the Difference

Of all the splits we've experienced, the ones at the ends of our hair aren't the most heartbreaking—but they are annoying. Now there are products that aim to prevent and repair split ends, including Redken Real Control Mineral Elixir, Paul Mitchell Super Strong Liquid Treatment, Pantene Pro-V Split End Prevention Cream, and White Sands The Cure 24/7 Hair Cell Renewal. According to cosmetic chemist Joseph Cincotta, they're "heavy enough to hold the split ends together for a few hours." They may also help prevent future breakage by lubricating wet hair

before brushing and combing and preserving the cuticle. He recommends the Redken serum for coarse hair because of its mineral-oil base but says that overall, the White Sands serum has particularly advanced technology for the problem. "The positively and negatively charged ingredients it contains form a complex that conditions and glues the split ends back together, lasting through two to three shampoos." But ultimately, this, too, is just a temporary fix. "The only real way to permanently get rid of split ends," he says, "is to cut them off." —KAYLEIGH DONAHUE

ture inside hair all the way to a boil, creating steam that erupts through the cuticle. And the pricey salon alternative isn't much better. "Chemical straightening interferes with the disulfide bonds in the hair shaft, causing the hair structure to start to disintegrate over time," says Neil Sadick, clinical professor of dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City.

WHAT'S MORE REALISTIC:

STRAIGHTEN WITH CARE.

You know the instructions that come with a new flatiron? If you threw them out long ago, it's worth downloading them from the manufacturer's website. According to dermatologists, not exceeding the maximum time the company suggests that the plates come in contact with hair is essential in minimizing damage. Lupo recommends using a flatiron no more than twice a week, and picking one with ceramic, rather than metal, plates: "They glide through the hair more easily, and the most important thing is to keep the flatiron moving." (We like Salon Tech Silicone 450 Professional Hairstyling Iron.) Fans of chemical straightening should consider switching to a keratin treatment, which adds a smooth, uniform coating on top of each strand but doesn't mess around with the cortex itself. According to Garren, "It won't make curly hair straight, but it will make it soft and glossy—and the results can last up to two months if you use the shampoo that usually comes with it." Just don't go anywhere near the so-called "Brazilian" keratin treatment, which could contain dangerous levels of formaldehyde. If a stylist tells you his keratin product will

actually straighten your hair for weeks at a time, not just improve the texture, a polite "No, thank you" is in order.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

GET A TRIM EVERY THREE WEEKS.

If, no matter how virtuous you've been, your hair still belies your remaining bad habits, "a trim every three to four weeks will get rid of frayed ends, but you won't have to lose all your length," says hairstylist Mark Townsend of the Sally Hershberger salons in New York and Los Angeles.

WHAT'S MORE REALISTIC:

ONCE A WEEK, APPLY A DEEP CONDITIONER.

It's cheaper and more convenient to simply camouflage the damage you have—and that's where deep-conditioning comes in. "The ingredients aren't that different from those in your daily conditioner, but because they are much more concentrated, they leave behind a smoothing film that won't wash off for days," explains Cincotta. Formulas with glycerin, panthenol, or amino acids can even penetrate the hair's cuticle, filling in areas weakened by heat or chemicals. Townsend recommends that clients with distressed hair deep-condition once a week, and consider leaving it on overnight if damage is severe—just place a towel on the pillow to prevent a mess. We like Infusium 23 Repairologie Leave-In Treatment and Nexxus Emergencée Strengthening Polymeric Reconstructor. ♦

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY LINDSY VAN GELDER

ANALYZE THIS

Three Allure staffers offered their hair up for evaluation. Pantene senior scientist Jeni Thomas compared the evidence to a sample of virgin hair. —KAYLEIGH DONAHUE



VIRGIN HAIR: "Here, the cuticle lies smooth and points toward the ends," Thomas says. But "overzealous brushing, especially of wet hair, can lift the cuticle and cause split ends and dullness."



HEAT-STYLED: The heat and physical stress of daily blow-drying and flatironing created "cracks and crevices in the cuticle," Thomas says. "Still, this appears to be the least damaged of the three."



CHEMICALLY STRAIGHTENED: "Japanese straightening, a process that uses chemicals and heat to reform the bonds in hair, can lead to curled, twisted, and cracked damage to the cuticle," says Thomas.



COLOR-TREATED: Frequent single-process color, plus highlights and blow-drying, made this cuticle "the most damaged sample we viewed," she says. "It's twisted from the dye and cracked from heat styling."