

« PROBLEM SOLVER
ASK OUR BEAUTY EXPERT



BARBARA, OUR BEAUTY EXPERT, WILL HELP FIX YOUR PROBLEMS

Dear Barbara,
Over the past few days, I've noticed a swelling on one of my fingers, just below my nail. It has come up on just one finger, and is tender to touch. The affected area has become reddish in colour and is painful when I apply pressure to it. It doesn't really affect my daily life, but I'm worried about whether I'm ignoring something serious. Do I need to visit a doctor?

— Sujata Sharma, Malad

Dear Sujata,
What you've described sounds like a condition known as paronychia. It's basically a skin infection that is caused due to bacteria or fungi. Unless the swelling is very large, it is not something to worry about, and you can't treat it by soaking your fingers in warm water and using an antifungal cream to clear the infection. However, if you're diabetic, you should visit your doctor, as this may be an indication of an aggravating condition. Also, remember to keep your hands and feet dry and clean, avoid biting your nails or picking at the skin around your nails and wear gloves if your hands are frequently exposed to harsh chemicals.



Dear Barbara,
I've recently started swimming in order to stay fit. I love this form of exercise and want to continue with it. However, I think that the frequent trips to the pool are damaging my hair. It has become dry and frizzled and I am worried that in the long run, I'll end up causing some serious damage. Is there anything I can do? I really don't want to give up swimming!

— Sagar Varma, Goregaon

Dear Sagar,
The chlorine that is used to disinfect the water in swimming pools is the reason for your dry hair. What you need to do is limit its exposure to the water by wearing a swimming cap. Also remember to shower before you step into the pool — your hair will absorb the clean water and so, will be less affected by the chlorine water in the pool. Another tip to follow is to shampoo your hair after you step out of the pool — however, make sure that you use an extremely mild shampoo to prevent dry hair. Follow up with a conditioner in order to keep your hair moisturised. We recommend using a leave-in conditioner for a hassle-free experience.

PUT TO THE TEST

When it comes to home remedies for healthy hair, coconut oil is one of the most commonly used ingredients. But, is it really effective? **Dev Goswami & Yamini Walia** speak to a couple of experts to find out

Coconut oil may not be a remedy that is as common as a spoonful of haldi (turmeric) and water to beat a cough, but it is a favoured haircare item in several homes. Most of us will recall being forced to head to school with our hair plastered with coconut oil. And as Dr. Apratim Goel, a cosmetic dermatologist & laser surgeon at Cutis Skin Studio, tells us, coconut oil has been used since ancient times, especially in the coastal regions of India, Indonesia, Thailand and the Caribbean islands. In fact, a few brands have even managed to achieve mega success based on just one product — coconut oil.

So, it has to be extremely healthy, right? Not quite. Dr. Apratim explains, "Coconut oil on its own does not have many benefits apart from conditioning your hair and treating a dry scalp. What makes it popular is its low cost and easy availability." So, should you include this hair and skincare product in your beauty regime? Read on to find out.

THE BENEFITS

Coconut oil may not be an item that you need to include in your haircare routine, but it does have a few benefits. Here we list out a few.

- **Use as a conditioner:** Warm coconut oil works as a very good conditioner for your hair. In fact, most conditioners contain coconut oil extracts, which give your hair a soft, glossy appearance. Dr. Apratim explains, "You can use a few drops of coconut oil to massage your scalp and then apply the rest gently to your hair strands." This will condition and moisturise your hair.
- **Prevent hairfall:** If you suffer from excessive hairfall, then coconut oil can work wonders. It helps to treat brittle hair that doesn't break from the roots, but from the hair shaft. Mixing coconut oil with mustard oil or amla (gooseberry) juice and applying the mixture to your hair is an effective home remedy, which will help prevent hairfall that is caused by breakage.
- **Get rid of lice:** Lice is a common hair problem amongst children and sometimes, for adults as well. To protect your hair from lice, coat wet hair with coconut oil and comb it using a fine-toothed comb — this is an easy way to remove lice without having to pull or tug at your hair, which can cause your hair to break.
- **Relieve stress:** An oil massage is a great stress buster. And, using coconut oil for your massage is a good idea. Dr. Apratim explains, "Mixing lavender oil or lavender extracts with coconut oil and then massaging your scalp before you go to bed is a great way to fight stress. It also induces a good night's sleep."

WAYS TO USE IT

Applying coconut oil to your hair and scalp is not the only way to use this product. Dr. Bharti Magoo, aesthetic &



>> Coconut oil, mixed with lavender oil, will lower stress and induce sleep



anti-ageing physician at Golden Touch Clinic, tells us about a few innovative ways that you can use this oil.

Hair

- Juice a carrot (drink it for its benefits or use it for cooking), and mix the grated remains with coconut oil. Apply the mixture on to your scalp and let it sit for around 30 minutes. Rinse it with water in order to add a healthy shine to your hair.
- Apply a mixture of coconut oil, almond meal and black sesame seeds to your hair in order to avoid premature grey hair.
- Applying a mixture of coconut oil and apple cider vinegar to your hair helps to combat itching and dandruff.

Skin

- Mix coconut oil with sandalwood oil, add a few leaves of saffron, haldi (turmeric) and tulsi (Holy basil) and then massage it on to your skin every day for one week — this will add a healthy glow to your face and body.
- Applying a mixture of coconut oil, mashed avocado and pomegranate to your skin will help diminish stretch marks and scars.
- Mix coconut oil with neem, tulsi and khus-khus. This mixture can help to reduce the appearance of the physical, skin-based symptoms of conditions such as psoriasis and dermatitis.

THE DISADVANTAGES

Coconut oil does have a few disadvantages. So, if you plan on adding it to your beauty routine, keep the following points in mind.

Chemically refined

The risk of chemically refined, bleached and deodorised coconut oil is quite high. Such oils do not retain much of the oil's healing properties. Dr. Bharti recommends that you use cold pressed or virgin oils, or pick mechanically hand pressed oils, as they retain their medicinal properties and are a healthier option.

Too oily

It is important to apply the right amount of oil to your hair. If you douse your hair in coconut oil, not only will the treatment prove ineffective, you will also end up with greasy, oily hair.

Dandruff or skin irritation

Coconut oil can induce dandruff because your oily hair will attract dust. This doesn't mean that you need to avoid using it completely — this effect is usually seen when you don't wash your hair properly after oiling your hair.

