

ALOE, HIBISCUS aka CONCHO NEEDLE and COCONUTMILK:

In the West Indies everyone washes their hair with a cactus (!) called Aloe Vera or to a lesser extent with another cactus called hibiscus (there seems to be some other plant or family of plants also called hibiscus I think) but is colloquially called concho needle. Aloe is well-known for its healing effects on just about anything. It can for instance be used as a sunscreen (and even eaten) but also for hairwashing. To my knowledge it behaves just like normal shampoo but it's also supposed to be good for the skin and scalp. In addition it's a lot more "natural" than shampoo, in fact Aloe is very often an ingredient in shampoos - check the back of your shampoo bottle. Perhaps one out of five shampoos contain Aloe. I ought to explain just how you can wash your hair with a cactus. You take a "leaf" (you'll know when you see one), open it or cut it in half and then get a knife and scrape the semi-transparent gel you will find inside the shell. Have a cup or a can to collect the jelly-like liquid you will get by scraping the "slime". It'll take a moment to do it but it's quite good fun. When you are done you pour it like shampoo over your hair. Then you shake and shake it out (do this on the beach and not in the shower because it "squirts") really well so that it spreads all over the hair and then just rinse like you're used to. The aloe plant can't be small when you harvest it, something like an armlength (well maybe not) for the leaf/piece you cut off. Aloe grows wildly in areas like the West Indies or but it's hard to know where to find it in a cold northern country (it'll take you five years to grow one from scratch in your kitchen window). Not long ago I discovered that pure Aloe "juice" is sold at my local health food store. If you find such a bottle, containing only pure Aloe liquid, then I have no reason to believe that there's any difference between that and self-harvested Aloe. Hibiscus is a flatter kind of cactus that you also take a piece of and cut it in two, then carve out the slimy-juicy inside into a bucket. The effect of hibiscus is like aloe or worse and it doesn't have the other healing effects as far as I know. A book I recently read claimed that some plants (when used in washing) give rise to a protective layer around the hairs - not too different from the natural oily layer the scalp emits. Aloe and Coconutmilk were listed among these and I conclude therefore that these are negative to locksforming in this particular sense.

Artist Fred Locks is a natural one.

HAIRDRESSERS:

Some hairdressers claim they can "make" dreadlocks. It's usually about the comb method and maybe waxe also, occasionally even braiding. Another favourite is perms and some add to that (can be anything from waxe to braiding). They're not at all doing a bad job but be sure they'll charge you for it. It adds up as we're talking figures like six hours (in Sweden they'd charge 30 dollars an hour, but I

doubt it's that expensive in other countries) and since it's going to break up (more or less) and you have to fix a little yourself. Remember this is meant to be a rough guide so be sure that there are exceptions among the hairdressers of the world. An American company with a Dutch branch, called Hair Police, specialize in dread perms and extensions. They know what their doing but won't share any business secrets with me. Check their site if you are interested: Hair Police.

WOOL SWEATER RUBBING:

A guy called Huey has a method not to be forgotten. It is best explained on his own page: Huey's dreads method.

COMMON PROBLEMS:

If you've for instance have run the comb run or crochet or in some other way (braids) divided the hair up in sections and decided that a certain square or area is to become a dreadlock, it's not the way the hair feels. Dreadlocks has to sort of "fit in" with the whirls of your hair if its continuing growth is going to be round and nice. You can expect to get something that resembles "flaps" down the bottom of the locks, which are not neat-looking. This will fix itself in time, the dreader your hair gets, but it can take time depending on how serious the case is. Sometimes even years until it's completely troubleless. This may well mean you can get 10 - 20 cm (1 inch = 2.54 cm) segment that absolutely don't look like round symmetric locks you see on mtv, and on almost all the locks of your head. But then, if lucky, you'll hardly notice it at all. To fix the flaps a crochet is actually great, all you do is a small operation, grab the flap with the crochet and entangle it the way you want it to look. It works wonders, but don't do more work than necessary with the crochet because then the root of the problem is not solved, you just take care of the symptoms. Even in the old honest quit-combing method these "flaps" may show up but only in the beginning and to a much lesser extent. The flaps fix themselves as time goes by, but you never know when, it can take a long long time depending on how dread your hair is. Don't get the idea of making a knot at the bottom, hiding the problem. It's just a short term solution. One knot might not decide stay and you have to add another. The loss in length is compensated by an embarrassing "clump", being visible (not from far though) once the knot is lifted from the scalp. If you undo the knot your lock will look like a pig's tail where the knot once was. Since we've said a hair dies after 5-7 years och is replaced by a new fresh hair popping up on a random spot of the scalp. If you have locks the probability of the hair popping up "inside" an already existing lock and will then join on to that lock. But sometimes the new hair must pop up right between two locks and then becomes a lonely and often curly hair. You drop 50 - 100 hairs a day so consequently 50 - 100 new ones appear so in only a month you have a whole bunch of these lonely hairs. People will say "they're beginning to break

up
and turn loose up there, ey?" (this is not the case but people don't know better). It raises the
question
what to do about them. Cut them away ? Well, then you'll get rid of them that's true but think of
the
long run - in a couple of years it'll be kind of thin as you get fewer and fewer hairs on your head.
Well
what happens to them ? 1. They join on to the nearest lock. 2. Enough lonely hairs find
themselves
close enough to each other and form a new (thin) lock. This is reason that there are locks of
varying
length and size in a hair with a couple of years passed. The varying length is not because
something has
been broken or cut off. With coloured people (very curly) these lonely hairs disappear so quickly
that
you never knew they were there. With other people with straight hair there can be "ownerless
hairs" of
shoulder length before they find their way in life. The older dreadlocks you have the faster these
hairs
will join or form a lock of their own.

The hair (more or less - depending on heritage etc) gets thinner as one gets older. This kind of
loss is of
course nothing that dreadlocks can prevent. Here are some old rastamen.

Two thick ones.

THICK AND THIN LOCKS:

How do you get thin and how do you get thick locks ? In the West Indies the fashion right now is
to
have very thin locks or no locks at all. In the seventies (for instance in the era of Bob Marley)
the
fashion was thick locks. Thick locks are called bongolocks and their bearer bongoman. After
some time
with the locks on your head you'll notice that two locks close to each other grow and join on to
each at
the bottom (and in time they gradually merge fully). Very often so called lonely hairs function as
bridges or links between two locks that then unite. It happens now and then, to prevent it
simply firmly
grab the two locks in question and tear them apart if you don't want big ones. Very often it's
after a
hairwash that you can notice two united locks (of course sometimes it's more than two) and one
quickly
developes the habit of checking with your hands. If you wait too long with the pulling apart the
day
comes when it has become impossible to pull them apart, then you can forget it. It is of course
possible (anything is possible) to cut them apart with a pair of scissors but it's absolutely
nothing I
recommend and is very risky. First it will look like splinters are coming out of there. Secondly the
hairs
aren't laying straight in one direction as it may look, hairs are stuck across and in every possible
direction so after just a few vertical cuts with the scissors it all hangs in just a few hairs =
catastrophy.
Everyone starts out with thin locks and some end up with thick and some with thin. It's not
seldom that
it all ends up in just only big clump in old days. When the hair is 5-7 years old it falls off we said
but

still hang in there when dreadlocked. This isn't completely true to a 100%, if you have thin locks it could happen that a tuft of "dead" hair slides off (after many years) or that you can notice a thinner segment, but this never happens in the case of a thick dreadlock. And also, washing or rinsing with water will bring out single "dead" hairs that wouldn't have fallen off so easily otherwise. Occasionally (it's rare though) you can find pictures with huge towers standing straight up. Hair grows straight up so it's "only" the laws of physics that makes them fall and lean one or the other way - at a certain length/bottom area ratio. So towers only arise when, at the same time, all locks of a big area ontop of your head decide to unite. Because of the great bottom size the lock will be able to stand straight up. Imagine the difference in being able to stand up on a flat desk, between a pencil and a bottle. Also imagine their both made of dreadlock and not any harder material. Dreadlock is of course not at soft as wool, perhaps like extremely compressed wool. Since the area of the head is limited it's not possible to cultivate a tower of infinite length - one day it's going to drop like Santa Claus's red top hat. The great overuse of a hat or a tam can help giving rise to a tower but only in the sense that the hat doesn't do anything compared to having it dangling freely. What I mean is that if you don't wear them in a hat they won't stay in the same fixed position but move around every time you turn your head around. I.e wearing a hat doesn't necessarily imply a bongolock, and not wearing a hat doesn't necessarily mean you'll avoid a bongolock. Only if you have the prerequisites for a bongolock you'll have one whether or not you wear a hat. The tam or hat though can help a bongolock that's already bound to be. Not just for bongolocks but for dreadlocks in general it's not easy to say whether a hat of some sort is negative or positive. It has to do with how you would have worn your hair otherwise. If your hair is exposed to a lot sunlight without a hat, then wearing a hat is negative in the sense that it covers the hair from sunlight (sunlight being tearing, note it especially when bathing in salt water). A hat is positive in the sense that it does not let the hair move freely, but so is a ponytail-style. And so on I am bound to this theoretical reasoning since in practise it's impossible to tell what was caused by the hat and what was caused by something else. But in short: A hat does a little good if and only if the circumstances are right.

Certainly a very odd formation. Possibly been cut.

DANDRUF, MOULD, COWSHIT, ROTTENING, GLUE, LICE AND OTHER MYTHS:

It's not uncommon for the scalp to become irritated too and you get dandruf. It's easy to get rid of, mix one tenth of apple cider vinegar when you wash your hair and it works without any problems. You

won't even smell sour vinegar but you shouldn't wash it with vinegar more than once a week (that is even more than sufficient for the dandruff to go).

Some rumours are about cowshit appliance to obtain dreadlocks are floating around. It's an urban legend of course but there is one origin. Women of some East African tribes (one of them being Masai I think) use moderate amounts of cowpat and other substances in their hair since it is considered attracting. I repeat they are not applying it in order to cultivate locks but since it's attracting whether they have locks or not. Occasionally you also hear about glue and people who have tried it in desperation. The whole idea is stupid and I haven't heard of a single successful example.

Moulding and rotting stories are heard occasionally, I'm not sure how this is supposed to happen. In such a case it has to be warm enough, moist and bad or no air circulation so if you want to be truly sure don't go to bed with wet hair. If you get lice you're in trouble. Louse shampoo kills the lice and their eggs, but the eggs remain attached to the hairs and need to be removed with a lice comb which is totally impossible. The eggs are dead so there won't be any births of new lice after the louse shampoo but it's not very clean and fresh to walk around like that. But it's something you have to live with. The only other alternative is indeed a haircut.

Often you hear that it's gross and dirty with dreadlocks and some story about how green slime drips out of them if you cut and squeeze them. Dreadlocks do not have to be dirty, usually the hair is not as "clean" as normal hair but as said it's not necessarily that way.

I've met several people who think they invented dreadlocks, know just what to do, have magical hints etc. Really they're not liars - they believe what they say but haven't really done any serious research. It's usually a case of post hoc ergo propter hoc conclusions (B came after A, therefore B is because of A - not necessarily true) or heavy inductive speculations. Like person X did A and then B happened therefore all persons under all circumstances can do A and B will follow, without any doubt whatsoever. This is the reason you've probably heard something being in conflict with what's in this guide (Note: By this I'm absolutely not saying I can't be wrong he he. I am not God, this is only my hobby).

Equip yourself with a good answer to the question "Why do you wear locks?", because you'll hear it many times. The ancient and original reason people had for wearing locks are indeed pretty much deeper than for instance that it's cool or different. So to speak, you carry a responsibility, you might put everyone with dreadlocks to shame if you make a fool out of yourself (this is how it is, not how I desire it to be). As an example I can mention that a hell of a lot of people associate with cannabis.