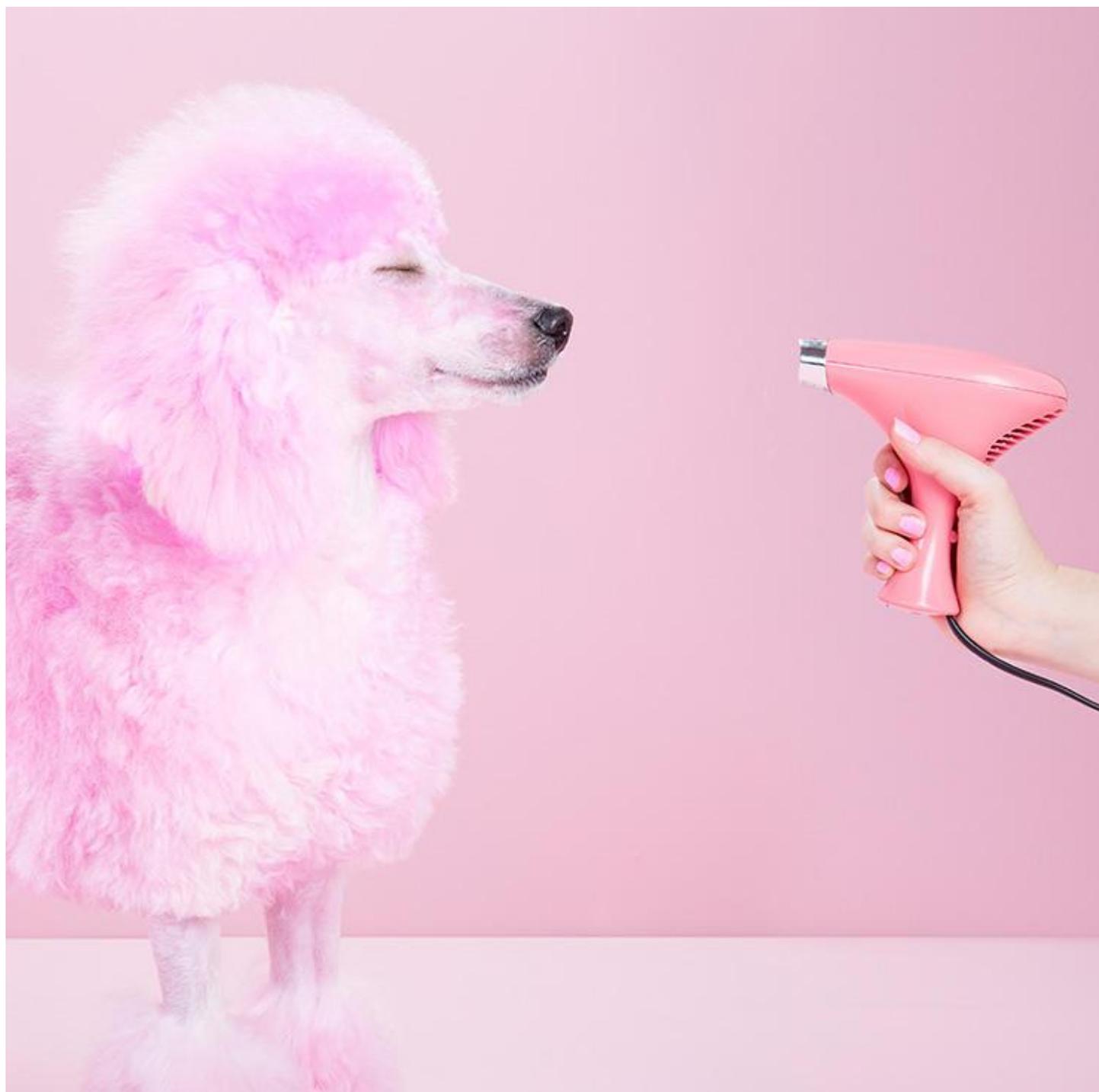


Beauty HAIR

6 Blow-Drying Mistakes That Are Adding Years To Your Hair

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Blow dryers can work magic, but they can also cause a whole host of hair problems. Sure, the process may seem like a no-brainer (take wet hair, turn on blow dryer, dry), but if you're not using the right technique and tools, you could be damaging your hair and accelerating aging, leaving it looking fried and frizzy. Here, the most common blow-dry blunders and how to fix them to get healthier, younger-looking hair. (Lose up to 25 pounds in 2 months—and look more radiant than ever—with the new *Younger in 8 Weeks* plan!)



You start out with soaking wet hair.

Yes, the point of a blow dryer is to take your hair from wet to dry, but starting out with drenched hair increases its exposure to damaging heat. Instead, gently towel dry your hair or let it air dry part of the way before reaching for the blow dryer. "It is best to pre-dry the hair to remove all the excess water before starting to section and style the hair," says Jonathan De Paca, a stylist at Frederic Fekkai Palm Beach. "This will keep the texture of your hair smooth and boost shine."



You're too close for comfort.

One big mistake that can easily damage your ends is holding the blow dryer too close to your hair on the brush, says Rebecca Kazin, MD, an associate director at the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery and an assistant professor of dermatology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. "Keep the blow dryer around 12 inches away from the hair to avoid damage," suggests De Paca.



You spend too much time in one section.

Like a moving walkway at the airport, you want to keep things constantly in motion, advises Kazin. Otherwise, you're just frying your hair in one spot. So it's no surprise that the hair near your face may be dryer and frizzier than other spots, since most of us tend to focus on this area the most.



You don't take advantage of the "cool" button.

That little button on your blow dryer actually has an important purpose: The cool shot seals the cuticle of the hair, which locks in moisture and helps keep hair looking shiny and healthy, according to Kazin. "When your hair is about 80% dry, switch over to the coolest setting," says De Paca. "All your hair needs at this point in the drying process are the finishing touches, and the cool shot adequately completes the drying and protects against overheating."

De Paca adds: "Closing the cuticle of your hair will reflect natural light and give you an extra-shiny look. It will also keep your hair less reactive to the elements, like humidity."



You skimp on quality when it comes to brushes and blow dryers.

For all hair types, De Paca recommends using a boar bristle brush. "This will add shine to the hair and helps to smooth the cuticle," he says. Skip metal brushes, which tend to hold heat—almost like a mini-hot tool—and cause damage. When it comes to choosing the best blow dryer, De Paca recommends ionic ones. "The ionic technology breaks down the water molecules and dries your hair much faster," he says. Also, choose a blow dryer that falls within the 1300 to 1875 watts range. "You want one that's powerful enough to do its job relatively quickly," says Kazin.



You don't adjust the settings.

Opt for a blow dryer with multiple heat settings. That way, you can adjust the airflow and temperature to suit your hair type, notes De Paca. For example, thick, coarse hair can often handle higher heat, while hair that is thin or fragile does better on a lower heat setting.

But choosing the right hair-care products is just as important as technique and tools. To help keep hair youthful and shiny, protect it. Always use heat-protecting products, such as Fekkai Blowout Primer or Kiehl's Heat-Protective Silk-Straightening Cream, before using any hot tools. As a bonus, these products also tend to cut down on frizz.