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BEAUTY > HAIRSTYLES, CUTS & COLOR TRENDS

The 12 Best Cleansing Conditioners and Co-Washes

If you have curly hair, you should add one of these to your rotation.

BY [LINDY SEGAL](#) PUBLISHED: OCT 26, 2022 1:11 PM EDT



SADE KINNER / EYEEM // GETTY IMAGES

Anyone with even dry hair knows that over-shampooing can sometimes make matters worse. But **conditioning** on its own isn't effective at cleaning the hair. That's where ultra-gentle cleansing conditioners enter the picture.

"Cleansing conditioners are a godsend for anyone whose hair is naturally dry or for hair that craves moisture," says celebrity colorist Mark DeBolt, co-founder of **[Mark Ryan Salon](#)**. They aren't for all hair types, though: "These cleansers are particularly

great for naturally curly hair. Someone with fine, straight hair might need to proceed with caution—however, it can be a good product to work into the routine. For example, someone who doesn't have naturally dry hair and likes to shampoo often could benefit from every other shampoo being with something more gentle, like a cleansing conditioner."

Depending on your hair, cleansing conditioners may be best used as part of a scalp-care rotation. "One should be on the lookout for scalp itchiness or irritation. Conditioning wash products can lead to build up on the scalp, so it is still important to periodically use a **clarifying shampoo**," recommends DeBolt.

Read on for 12 of the best cleansing conditioners to try, plus more expert intel from DeBolt.

Wella Nutricu

g Conditioner



NOW 62% OFF

🔖 ~~\$79~~ \$30 AT WALMART

\$25 AT ULTA BEAUTY

PROS

- ✔ Great for wavy hair

Some cleansing conditioners can be too heavy for waves, but this formula strikes a good moisture balance that works on hair types from wavy to coarse.

BEST FOR COILY HAIR

Ouidad Coil Infusion Cleansing Conditioner



NOW 27% OFF

~~33~~ \$22 AT AMAZON

\$30 AT WALMART

\$26 AT MACY'S

PROS

☑ Defines curls

Some reviewers use this product as a conditioner with shampoo, while others used it solo. "This conditioner is perfect for my curly-haired pals because it definitely helped define my curls and gave me refreshed, juicy curls! It helped provide a deep cleanse of my scalp," wrote one reviewer. BEST FOR DRY CURLY HAIR

Matrix A Curl Can Dream Co-Wash



\$19 AT WALMART

\$18 AT JCPENNEY

\$21 AT FRAGRANCENET.COM

PROS

- ✔ Contains manuka honey

This creamy formula is made with nutrient-dense Manuka honey to moisturize and protect curls.

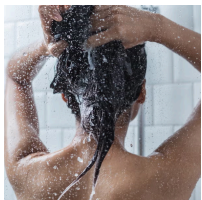
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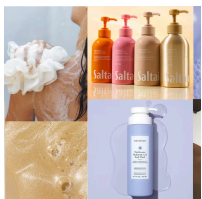
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DRUGSTORE DEAL

TPH by TARAJI Hustle & Co Co-Wash



\$13 AT WALMART

PROS

- ✔ Under \$10

Reviewers love this affordable co-wash from Taraji P. Henson's haircare line. "This conditioner is super moisturizing on my curly hair. I use it as a leave-in and as a co-

wash. I'd definitely recommend and purchase again," raves one fan.

HIGHLY RATED

RENPURE Cleansing Conditioner Rosemary Mint



SHOP AT AMAZON

PROS

- ☑ Smells great
- ☑ Prime delivery

With over 8,000 five-star reviews on Amazon, this invigorating cleansing conditioner is a bona fide obsession for all hair types. "I have dry 2B hair, and I have been looking for a good cleansing conditioner to co-wash with. I think my search is over! This smells good, very hydrating, and makes my scalp feel tingly," writes a recent convert.

BEST SCENT

Camille Rose Caramel Cowash Cleansing Conditioner



\$19 AT WALMART

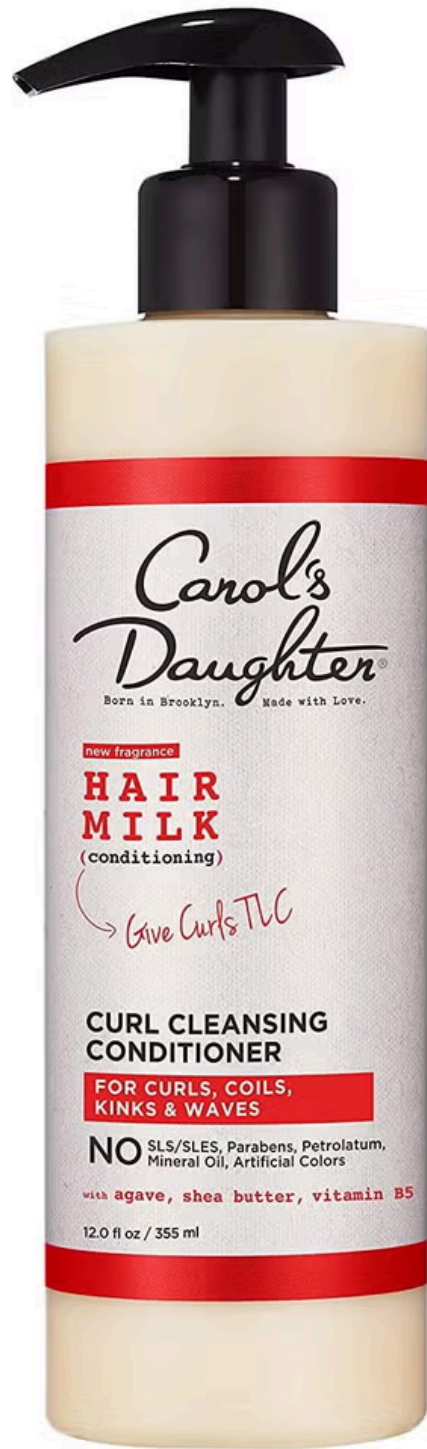
PROS

- ☑ Smells amazing
- ☑ Deep cleaning

In addition to smelling like a bakery, this cleansing conditioner is "very moisturizing and it really cleans your hair similar to shampoo but much better," says one reviewer.

BEST LIGHTWEIGHT CONDITIONING CLEANSER

Carol's Daughter Hair Milk Curl Cleansing Conditioner



SHOP AT AMAZON

PROS

- ☑ Lightweight
- ☑ Won't weigh curls down

Another Amazon favorite, Carol's Daughter's Hair Milk is made with ingredients like shea butter and agave nectar to moisturize curls without weighing them down.

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BEST FOR DETANGLING

Big Hair Soft Co-Wash Conditioner



\$25 AT THIRTEENLUNE.COM

PROS

- ✔ Detangles
- ✔ Contains coconut oil

This nourishing formula features aloe vera, vitamins E and B5, and plenty of softening oils to provide slip and leave hair tangle-free.

BEST FOR DAILY USE

As I Am Coconut Cowash Cleansing Conditioner



\$9 AT AMAZON

👏 \$16 AT WALMART

\$10 AT SALLY BEAUTY

PROS

- ☑ Safe for color-treated hair

Cleansing conditioners are great for in-between wash days, but this gentle formula can be used daily, and is even safe to use on color-treated hair. "My hair feels healthy and smooth. I'm on my fourth tub and won't be going back to regular conditioner," says one buyer.

BEST FOR SENSITIVE SCALPS

Christophe Robin Luscious Curl Cleansing Balm with Kokum Butter



\$45 AT WALMART

\$45 AT BLOOMINGDALE'S

PROS

- ✔ Fights frizz

You know the luxe, gentle cleansing balms you use on your face? This is the same idea, but for your scalp. And thanks to the moisturizing kokum butter and chia seed oil, hair will be less frizzy, too.

BEST FOR THICK HAIR

Oribe Cleansing Cream for Moisture & Control



NOW 17% OFF

↕ \$38 AT WALMART

\$49 AT NEIMAN MARCUS

\$49 AT SEPHORA

PROS

☑ Deep conditioning

This creamy formula does the job of shampoo, conditioner, and even a deep conditioning treatment. "I've wasted so much money on other co-wash products. I need to keep my showers short and simple, and this type of product is necessary for that. I put this in first, let it sit while I shave and use bar soap, rinse this out, and I'm done in 15 minutes," says a fan.

BEST FOR SCALP

Drunk Elephant Laini Latherless Conditioning Co-Cleanser



\$45 AT ULTA BEAUTY

PROS

- ✔ Soothes scalp

Skin care always comes first for Drunk Elephant, so it makes sense why they put the focus on scalp care in this formula. It has a low pH to maintain a healthy scalp, plus

nourishing rose hip fruit oil and marula oil to coddle strands.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does a cleansing conditioner do?

Also called a co-wash, a cleansing conditioner does just what the name says: conditions as it cleanses. "Cleansing conditioners are designed to remove impurities without stripping the hair of its natural oils," explains DeBolt. "They often contain innovative cleaning agents like micellar technology—like in skincare—to attract dirt and cleanse the hair without the use of harsh cleaning agents such as sulfates."

What is the difference between cleansing conditioner and regular conditioner?

"The biggest difference is that a cleaning conditioner does contain some sort of cleaning agent that will remove dirt, product buildup, or environmental pollutants," says DeBolt. In other words, you want to use a regular shampoo if you're using a regular conditioner, so you still get cleansing benefits.

How do you choose the best cleansing conditioner for your hair?

The stylist says to always read the label closely. "Look for descriptive language that appeals to your hair concerns. For example, hair that craves hydration would benefit from a product that contains the words nourish, deep hydration, etc. These cleansers often contain different oils or shea butter," explains DeBolt.

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