

Hibiscus legacy

Hibiscus is not just an ornament for your hair. It is also a perfect antidote for some common hair ailments.

By: Soumya Jain



Where do you remember seeing these pretty hibiscus flowers? Perhaps, in the hair of Hawaiian girls Hula dancing by the beach. This flower has numerous health and beauty benefits as well. Hibiscus is a common flowering tree in India, available in more than 150 species of hibiscus flower across the country. It is used a lot in Hindu rituals. It has been traditionally used in Ayurveda and ancient Chinese medicine as well.



Flower to health

Nutritionist Aishwarya Rajan from NutriBenefits says, "Several studies on Hibiscus flower are being held in India. A few of them have found hibiscus flower extracts to be beneficial for correcting liver and stomach ailments. Others have claimed that the flower acts as a laxative, relaxes the uterus (in cases of endometriosis), controls blood pressure, increases circulation and reduces cholesterol. The high vitamin C content in Hibiscus flowers helps resist colds and chest congestion."

Hibiscus infusions form a natural herbal rinse and provide excellent conditioning by detangling hair and giving it a soft texture after a wash. Procedure:

- Pluck fresh hibiscus flowers and leaves (one bowl full) and immerse them in a mug of water
- Crush these immersed flowers with your hands (or use a mortar and pestal)
- Let it remain in the water for 30 minute to let the goodness settle
- Use the water to condition your hair (sieve of the leaves and the petals)
- Rinse hair with cold water
- Do this regularly for a week and notice the sheen in your hair.

Courtesy: Aishwarya Rajan, Nutritionist, NutriBenefit, New Delhi

Hibiscus is usually consumed in the form of tea. It has a distinctive taste with a pleasant fragrance and can be served hot or cold. Hibiscus tea particularly helps in lowering cholesterol level and high blood pressure. In a study conducted by Diane L McKay, PhD, of Tufts University in Boston, it was proved that consuming hibiscus tea resulted in a drop in blood pressure by seven points. Although seven points might not sound much, it is proven that consuming hibiscus tea on a regular basis does reduce the risk of a stroke or heart attack.

Megha Dinesh, Brand Manager at Aura, The Park explains, "Hibiscus is also diuretic apart from having cooling properties. Having hibiscus tea could thus reduce one's cancer risks and bladder infection while strengthening the immune system."

Hibiscus is ideal for counteracting the effects of air pollutants. Air pollutants not only upset normal balances, but cause many eruptive conditions and irritative reactions. Hibiscus offers ideal protection. Its antioxidant properties give protection against cell-damaging free radicals. Apart from tea, hibiscus can also be consumed as a dietary supplement in a capsule form. The dosage, however, should be checked with herbalist first.

Shine inside out

Want that glossy shine in your hair which is much flaunted in shampoo advertisements? Prepare your home made hibiscus conditioner and watch it work miracle on your hair. Hibiscus has a soothing and cooling effect on the scalp. It treats head rashes and dandruff effectively. It is of particular benefit in seborrhoeic conditions of the scalp. It helps to reduce oil-gland secretions in hair and scalp. Hibiscus helps to remove and reduce pore clogging, thus improving the general look and condition of hair. It also reduces excessive scaling, itching and redness of the scalp. It stimulates blood circulation in the scalp which helps the supply of essential nutrients to follicles.

Dinesh explains, "Due to its vitamin C content, hibiscus is a good cleanser and it spurs up cell renewal. Since it has astringent properties, it tones and tightens the scalp without making it dry." It could also be used as a natural dye camouflaging premature greying of hair with its purplish colour. It is also recognised to stimulate hair growth. A hibiscus hair pack is an ideal dote to induce cooling and protection from heat waves.



Intensive Hair Therapy

Created with the goodness of nature, this is an unusually versatile and intensive hair and scalp treatment. Enjoy a relaxing head massage by therapists followed by a nourishing hair pack. Ingredients in this hair pack are customised and vary from avocado paste, cocoa butter, ripe banana or hibiscus.

Duration: 45 minutes

Price: Rs 1,350 plus taxes

Traditional Scalp Massage

Traditional therapists work on the upper back, face and head and lightly on the shoulders, using a combination of gentle pressure, stroking, and massage that focuses on vital energy points. This compact treatment using sesame oil relieves stress and headaches, helps one to relax, and increases blood circulation.

Duration: 30 minutes


Price: Rs 1,050 plus taxes

Both treatments available at: Aura at The Park, Chennai and New Delhi

The spa effect

Despite having a long history in Ayurveda, hibiscus is not used much in Indian spas. The Ayurveda system of medication recommends it widely for hair fall due to thyroid malfunction, dandruff, weeping eczema, etc. International skin care and spa brands do use the astringent, emollient, toning and detoxifying qualities of hibiscus. Jagpreet Kaur, Spa Manager of Spa Soul at Galaxy Hotel Shopping Spa, Gurgaon says, "Hibiscus is a highly potent plant and can be used with a lot of versatility. Apart from hair treatments, it can be widely used in body wraps as it heals skin irritation and dryness. It makes an excellent hydrating as well as a skin-repair wrap."

The alpha-hydroxy-acids in hibiscus reduce dry flaky skin and increase skin moisture. It, thus, improves skin flexibility and elasticity, as well as increases moisture levels in the skin. The anthocyanocides in the flower have astringent, anti-inflammatory, and free radical scavenging, as well as enzyme inhibition properties. Finally, the high mucilage content enhances the retention of the skin's hydric content. In totality, this makes the herb useful in defying age. Aura Spa at The

Park uses hibiscus in its hair treatments like Intensive Hair Therapy and Traditional Scalp Massage. According to Dinesh, these treatments are gaining much attention from consumers. She says, "The scalp massage is a popular treatment and our female guests do get attracted a lot towards Intensive Hair Therapy." Bangkok Marriott Resort and Spa uses a replenishing pink hibiscus face cleanser in its Aromatic Facial treatment. The cleansing milk is designed to purify, calm and soothe sensitive skin. Pink hibiscus maintain skin elasticity. 

Hair oil: The leaves and flowers of hibiscus are good for healing ulcers and for improving the growth and colour of hair. Boil the flowers in coconut or sesame oil and then apply to hair. About 10 flowers can be used for about 150-200 ml of oil. Natural dyes are also prepared from extracts of the flower.

Hair mask: The leaves and flowers are mucilaginous, the extract of which can be applied on hair to tackle hair-fall and dandruff. Ground hibiscus with soaked fenugreek seeds and apply to hair for a cooling effect during summer.

Courtesy: Jagpreet Kaur, Spa Manager, Spa Soul, Galaxy Hotel Shopping Spa, Gurgaon