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6 Hair Mistakes That Age You Most

Even when you're meticulous about your appearance, the wrong cut and color can still add years

1 TOO SHORT

"If hair is healthy and plentiful, there's no reason to chop it into a conservative crop just to make it more age-appropriate," says Thom Priano, a hairstylist at Garren New York in New York City. Even as they move into their 40s and 50s, plenty of women still look better with long hair.

Instead If you do go short, keep it slightly shaggy—think Sharon Stone's crop. You'll look more modern, and the maintenance will be easier without blunt lines. "You should soften things up as you get older," says Jason Stanton, a hairstylist in Los Angeles and London. Use a pomade on the ends (more will be too slick) to give your cropped cut shine. Try Nioxin Smoothing Reflectives Defining Pomade (\$13, nioxin.com for salons; A).

2 TOO LONG

Excessive length can drag hair down, pulling your features along with it—the anti-face-lift. The worst offender: long, parted-down-the-middle, shapeless locks, which also telegraph the "me decade."

Instead To keep some length, consider a choppy bob that sits just below the collarbone, suggests Paul Labrecque of the eponymous New York City salons. "Asymmetrical or less-than-perfect shapes deflect attention away from wrinkles," he adds. Since longer hair can look dry and

frazzled, treat it weekly to a deep conditioner: Garnier Fructis Triple Nutrition 3-Minute Undo Dryness Reversal Treatment (\$6, drugstores; B) contains exfoliating apricot seeds.

3 TOO DARK

Holding on to that jet-black shade could be aging you. Extremely dark hair against a light scalp makes thinning more visible. It also casts shadows on your skin so wrinkles look more pronounced, says Gary Howse, creative director of the Gary Manuel salons in Seattle.

Instead Go two or three shades lighter with either permanent color or highlights around your face, says colorist Sharon Dorram of Sharon Dorram Color at Sally Hershberger in New York City. Or opt for a warmer hue: For example, if you are a cool, dark brown, choose a creamier chocolate instead. Increase coverage of even the most dye-resistant grays with No Gray for Women (\$5.75, drugstores; C), a booster you mix with your regular

color to help it adhere better. In an informal test at the Good Housekeeping Research Institute, adding No Gray into the dye mixture provided better gray coverage than at-home permanent hair dye alone.

4 TOO LIGHT

"Hair the same tone as your complexion washes you out," says Louis Licari, a celebrity colorist with salons in New York City and Beverly Hills. He points out that even Madonna's blond isn't as blond as it once was—which makes it more skin flattening. You'll also need to put on a lot more makeup to brighten up your features if you go too light.

Instead A bit of contrast can give your skin a healthier glow. "If you're too light, add in some deeper, caramel lowlights," suggests Priano. For DIY dyeing, Licari recommends you buy several boxes in similar hues and pluck and dye a few hairs to see which color is the most brightening when you hold it up to your cheek. →

