

High Speed Hair

You're running your boat at top speed, with the wind in your face and your hair whipping behind you like fire. You feel an overwhelming sense of freedom and confidence. That is, until it's time to meet friends at that fancy dockside restaurant, and you find yourself faced with a problem worse than a bad perm: high-speed hair.

Boating at high speed can be a hair-raising experience—literally. Not only can it turn your "do" into a brittle, tangled nest, but the fear of running into someone you know can make you seriously contemplate a buzz cut. But before you break out the clippers, read on. I know the Susan Powter look is appealing, but while it eliminates the problem of high-speed hair, it also creates a new problem: sunburnt scalp.

CAN HIGH-SPEED HAIR BE AVOIDED?

My boat has a top speed of 70 mph. It does not have a windshield, so when I'm going that fast, my cheeks flap in the wind and my hair gets snarlier than a tangled fishing line.

My thin, naturally curly hair is, of course, the type most prone to tangles and wind damage.

As the boating season progresses, my hair gets lighter and drier from the sun, and tangles seem to increase exponentially.

I've boated with my hair at all different lengths and am still searching for the ideal cut. While short hair definitely deters knots, it also sticks out in all sorts of odd directions in a stiff breeze. So, if you're going for the "just stuck my finger in a socket" look, you'll be fine.

Otherwise, the best bet for short hair is to always face the direction of the wind, unless

you want some volume. If that's the case, first face against the wind, then turn towards it—a technique not unlike blow-drying your hair with your head upside down.

Long hair looks the coolest when you're cruising fast but can also be the worst to deal with when the fun is done. One friend with really thick hair says she's had painful boating experiences when the weight of her hair has whipped against her face. A comforting thought for those of us with thin hair.

My hairstylist Sandy says long-haired boaters are asking for trouble unless they pull hair back into a ponytail or braid. Not only does this help prevent knots, but it improves visibility. Clips might also be necessary to keep those inevitable stray hairs in place.

Chin-length hair is the most difficult to keep from turning into a rat's nest. It's long enough to tangle but too short to pull back. So what can those of you with chin-length hair do? Make sure your boat has a windshield and kiss that dashboard.

How to enjoy boating without shaving your head.

Sandy the hairstylist also recommends spraying a leave-in conditioner on your hair before boating. This will keep hair soft, making it less likely to tangle and easier to comb after you're docked.

WHAT IF IT'S TOO LATE?

You swam, then you sped. You had a blast, but your hair didn't. Your tresses are stressed, and ferocious brushing only results in the loss of chunks the size of China. In fact,



pulling at tangles is even more damaging to hair than wind.

The first step of any "can this hair be saved?" project is to shampoo and condition. Fortunately, there are hair-care products that seem to exist solely for the problem of high-speed hair. Some conditioners double as detanglers, God's gift to women boaters. Without them I'd be bald. Just remember: If you use a detangler, be patient when combing. Use a wide-toothed comb, and don't pull; *never* use a brush. This is personal experience talking.

SHOULD YOU EVEN CARE?

Boating is an escape from reality and from life's complicated issues, like hair. So perhaps the easiest way to handle high-speed hair is to invest in some cute nautical-type hats, have them handy

when you dock, and don't worry about it.

Or you could do what Sandy's motorcycle-riding customers do: wear a helmet. Not such a bad idea, especially if your husband's driving.

Connie Lynd Sievers is a boater from Ohio. She's managed to keep from going bald or shaving her head, though she's come close.

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