

Why You Have Curly Hair But Your Friend Doesn't



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From around ages 8 to 18, all I ever wanted was straight hair. My bouncy curls—I was called “Shirley Temple” as a kid—seemed unruly and made me feel painfully different, in the shadow of my friends’ straight, shiny, seemingly easier hair. This was before straighteners became ubiquitous and styling treatments claimed to calm curls. Instead, I tried all sorts of ridiculous measures like streaking baby oil through my hair and having a friend iron my hair—with a clothing iron. As it turns out, while I was struggling to embrace my roots, pun intended, my friends with pin-straight locks swooned over my curls. As they say, the grass is always greener.

I’ve since turned a corner, appreciating my hair, which has since mostly relaxed from ringlets to beachy curls. I still blow-out my hair from time to time and still pine for the shine that comes with straight hair, but I also love the simplicity of letting my hair air-dry and having styled hair that took almost no time to even style. And if we’re taking popular opinion into account, I admit, I get far more compliments on my curly hair than my straight.

But just like so many other processes in our body, the hair you’re dealt with comes down to science, and there are three contributing factors:

Follicle

This is the portion of your hair that grows underneath the scalp. People with straight hair have a round follicle, while those with curly locks have a more oval-shaped follicle. [The flatter the follicle, the greater the curl.](#)

Angle

The **direction** the follicle grows makes a difference, too. While curly hair protrudes at an angle, straight hair emerges straight out of the scalp, forming a right angle. This is also why straight hair is usually shinier than curly hair: **Sebum**, your hair's natural oil, covers straight locks better than it does curly.

Fibers

Your hair, or "shaft," is made of dead cells packed with keratin protein, which contains cysteine, an amino acid with sulfur-rich molecules. When cysteine meets cysteine, they create **disulfide bonds**, which are more prevalent in curly hair because curly strands bring them closer together. (The point of straightening treatments is to break these bonds.) That said, these bonds aren't so much a cause as a **support system** for those bouncy curls. Ultimately, follicle and angle are the stronger determinants.

So can you change your hair type? Even though some people experience inexplicable **hair pattern changes** that they attribute to factors like hormonal shifts, it's not the norm. That's why we created products to help people embrace their individual hairstyles. By creating customized products, we're focusing on what will elevate your hair type—not what's right for someone else.

Looking to boost your personal **curl pattern**? Prose's **curl cream** works as a styler, touch-up tool, or both. Our goal is a hydrated, frizz-free style that works for your unique needs. The grass can be just as green on your side—you just have to know how to embrace it.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Archana Ram is an Ojai, California-based writer and editor specializing in beauty, wellness, food, and travel for outlets like *Vogue*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Afar*, and more. You can learn more about her writing, travels, and golden retriever on [Instagram](#).

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