

## Health Benefits of Henna

In the countries where henna is traditionally used, henna is regarded as having ‘*baraka*,’ or blessedness. This blessedness is the folk interpretation of observed relief or prevention of minor physical skin and hair problems which were not understood before the era of microscopes and petri dishes. The Ebers Papyrus, an Egyptian medical text written around 1550 BCE, described henna as being part of medicines compounded for what appears to be ringworm and athlete’s foot. It was also used to promote wound healing. Henna was also used to promote wound healing.<sup>1</sup> Henna was associated with cleanliness and health in Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya’s 14th century book on herbal and medical practices.<sup>2</sup>

Though henna has been used for the health and wellness of skin and hair for thousands of years, medical research projects testing the therapeutic potential of henna are fairly recent, with dozens of studies currently underway or recently completed.<sup>3</sup> There are promising medical uses for refined and formulated henna being tested in current medical research but these will not be covered in this book because they are still experimental. This book will concentrate on henna applications suitable for minor problems and simple applications associated with hairdressing, manicures and pedicures.

At the present time, henna is not used in the west for its health benefits because there is no regulation or standardization of henna processing and exporting.<sup>4</sup> Exports labeled “henna” often contain unlisted additives, adulterants, metallic salts, para-phenylenediamine and other dangerous chemicals which pass through customs without seizure, and which could cause serious harm rather than healing, as was shown in a misdiagnosis and death of a pet from ingesting an inaccurately labeled henna product.<sup>5</sup> Even if a package labeled ‘henna’ does not contain contaminants and adulterants, there is no requirement for independent laboratory testing for lawsone content, pesticides, or naturally occurring contaminants. Without regulatory standards for henna, dose/time for medical use is not possible.

Henna is an agricultural product and there is tremendous variation within and among crops; the variability has been an obstacle to medical research. Catherine Cartwright-Jones, PhD, sends

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<sup>1</sup> Nicoletti, M., Petitto, V., Gallo, F., Multari, G., Federici, E., Palazzino, G. 2012. “The Modern Analytical Determination of Botanicals and Similar Novel Natural Products by the HPTLC Fingerprint Approach.” *Studies in Natural Products Chemistry*, Volume 37, page 242. Atta-ur- Rahman, editor

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. *Medicine of the Prophet* 1998. Islamic Texts Society. Translated by Penelope Johnstone

<sup>3</sup> Semwala, R. B., Semwala, D. K., Combrinck, S., Cartwright-Jones, C., Viljoen, A. 2014. "Lawsonia inermis L. (henna): Ethnobotanical, phytochemical and pharmacological aspects," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, June 2014

<sup>4</sup> Semwala, R. B., Semwala, D. K., Combrinck, S., Cartwright-Jones, C., Viljoen, A. 2014. “Lawsonia inermis L. (henna): Ethnobotanical, phytochemical and pharmacological aspects,” *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, June 2014, P 20.

<sup>5</sup> Jardes, D. J., Ross, L. A., Markovich, J., E., 2013. “Hemolytic anemia after ingestion of the natural hair dye Lawsonia inermis (henna) in a dog.” *Journal of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care*. Volume 23, Issue 6, pages 648–651, November/December 2013

every Ancient Sunrise® shipment to an independent laboratory for testing to prove purity for your safety. Ancient Sunrise® henna can be used in traditional home-remedy topical applications with the assurance that henna, and only henna, is in the package, and the characteristics of that henna have been tested.

Only a physician is qualified to diagnose a condition and prescribe treatment, but with a physician's permission, there are some simple applications of pure henna tested by an independent laboratory that are suitable for self-care of several minor conditions of the hair and scalp.



### **Henna and Hair Care**

Henna is antifungal,<sup>6</sup> and has some proven antibacterial activities as well. Henna can eliminate fungal dermatophytes<sup>7</sup> living in the skin such as the *tinea* and *masalezzia*. These fungi can cause superficial infections of the skin, hair and nails. Some examples are dandruff, ringworm,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Rahmoun, Nadjib, Zahia Boucherit-Otmani, Kebir Boucherit, Mohammed Benabdallah, and Nouredine Choukchou-Braham. 2013. "Antifungal activity of the Algerian *Lawsonia inermis* (henna)." *Pharmaceutical Biology* 51, no. 1: 131-135. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed March 20, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> G.S. Gozubuyuk, E. Aktas, N. Yigit "An ancient plant *Lawsonia inermis* (henna): Determination of in vitro antifungal activity against dermatophytes species." *Journal de Mycologie Médicale / Journal of Medical Mycology*, Volume 24, Issue 4, Pages 313-318

<sup>8</sup> Bosoglu A., Birdane F., and Solmaz H., 1998. "The Effect of Henna Paste in Ringworm in Calve.s" *Indian Veterinary Journal* 75, January

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athletes' foot, and fungal infections of the nails.<sup>9</sup> Henna can also reduce some inflammations<sup>10</sup> and can eliminate head lice.<sup>11</sup> These simple remedies only require applying henna paste<sup>12</sup> to the area of discomfort or infection and keeping it on the skin long enough for the lawsone to penetrate; no complicated formulation is necessary to achieve good results.

Henna can eliminate dandruff when caused by *Malassezia furfur*,<sup>13</sup> a species of fungus naturally found on the skin surfaces of humans and many animals. This fungus consumes the oils from skin, and in humans, often inhabits the scalp. Most people who use henna regularly to dye their hair have no dandruff. People who have dandruff caused by *Malassezia furfur* may experience a sudden fall of dandruff after their first application of henna: this is because when henna kills off the fungus, the outermost layer of infected skin exfoliates. Healthy skin remains and flourishes.

Ringworm infections are caused by *tinea* fungal species which feed on keratin, often in hairy areas of the body. Henna can eliminate most tinea dermatophytosis in a single application of henna paste.<sup>14</sup> Ringworm thrives in tanning beds, and can infect people who patronize them. Ringworm often infects dogs and cats, and their owners can be infected through cuddling and grooming. Ringworm survives in moist areas of gyms and swimming pools, causing athlete's foot. A single topical application of henna paste can effectively relieve tinea pedis (athlete's foot),<sup>15</sup> tinea cruris (jock itch) which affects the groin area, tinea capitis which affects the scalp, and tinea barbae which affects facial hair. Henna will stain hair and skin when applied to these areas. A single application is sufficient to rid the area of tinea until the stain has exfoliated. Repeated applications of henna paste can relieve tinea unguium which affects the fingernails and toenails.

A person who, on their physician's recommendation and permission uses henna paste to eliminate fungal infections will have to weigh the convenience of getting rid of the fungus with a

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<sup>9</sup> Berenji, F. Rakhshandeh, H., Ebrahimipour, H., 2010. "In vitro study of the effects of henna extracts (*Lawsonia inermis*) on *Malassezia* species." *Jundishapur Journal of Microbiology*, Volume 3, Issue 3, Summer 2010, 125 – 128.

<sup>10</sup> Gupta, S., Ali, M., Pillai, K.K., Sarwar Alam, M. 1993. "Evaluation of anti-inflammatory activity of some constituents of *Lawsonia inermis*." *Fitoterapia* Volume 64, Issue 4, 1993, Pages 365-366

<sup>11</sup> El-Basheir, Z., Fouad, M. A. H. 2002. "A Preliminary Pilot survey on Head Lice, Pediculosis in Sharkia Governate and Treatment of Lice with Natural Plant Extracts." *Journal of the Egyptian Society of Parasitology*, Vol 32, No 3, December 2002, Zeinab

<sup>12</sup> Mix pure henna powder with a mildly acidic liquid just as show in chapter 7, Mix Your Paste

<sup>13</sup> Berenji, F. Rakhshandeh, H., Ebrahimipour, H., 2010. "In vitro study of the effects of henna extracts (*Lawsonia inermis*) on *Malassezia* species." *Jundishapur Journal of Microbiology*, Volume 3, Issue 3, Summer 2010, 125 – 128.

<sup>14</sup> Bosoglu A., Birdane F., and Solmaz H., (1998) "The Effect of Henna Paste in Ringworm in Calves" *Indian Veterinary Journal* 75, January

<sup>15</sup> For a complete description of applying henna to treat athlete's foot, see Chapter XX pages XXX.

single henna application against having a henna stain for three weeks on the skin or several months on the nails.

## Henna and Head Lice

Head lice (*Pediculus humanus capitis*) have been itchy, contagious pests annoying humans for millennia, living in people's hair and sucking their blood. Head lice populations have increased since the 1960's and now infest hundreds of millions of people worldwide.<sup>16</sup> Head lice lay eggs on the shafts of hair.<sup>17</sup> Once established in a household, school, or village, head lice are stubbornly resistant to eradication even with strong chemical remedies because they can live for two days in bedding, hair brushes, and clothing. Lice spread when people are in close, friendly contact, grooming, dressing, and sleeping near each other. One application of henna paste to the hair can kill head lice,<sup>18</sup> will kill the eggs as it does for other insect pests,<sup>19 20 21</sup> and nymphs without resorting to chemical treatments or shaving the head.

To kill head lice, eggs, and nymphs, use laboratory certified pure henna with high lawsone content, and no impurities or additives, mix and apply as seen in Chapter X, pages XXX. For difficult infestations, add 25g of artemisia or fenugreek per 100g of Ancient Sunrise® henna.<sup>22</sup> A mixture of Artemisia and henna is the most effective against head lice, but Artemisia should not be used on children, pregnant or nursing woman.

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<sup>16</sup> Gratz, N. (1998). "Human lice, their prevalence and resistance to insecticides.". Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO).

<sup>17</sup> Buxton, Patrick A. (1947). "The biology of *Pediculus humanus*". *The Louse; an account of the lice which infest man, their medical importance and control* (2nd ed.). London: Edward Arnold. pp. 24–72.

<sup>18</sup> M. El-Basheir and Mahmoud A. H. Fouad (2002) A Preliminary Pilot survey on Head Lice, Pediculosis in Sharkia Governate and Treatment of Lice with Natural Plant Extracts." *Journal of the Egyptian Society of Parasitology*, Vol 32, No 3, December 2002, Zeinab

<sup>19</sup> Marimuthu, S., Rahuman, A. A., Santhoshkumar, T., Jayaseelan, C., Kirthi, K. V., Bagavan, A., Kamaraj, C., Elango, G., Zahir, A. A., Rajakumar, G., Velayutham, K. 2012. "Lousicidal activity of synthesized silver nanoparticles using Lawsonia inermis leaf aqueous extract against *Pediculus humanus capitis* and *Bovicola ovis*." *Parasitology Research*, November 2012, Volume 111, Issue 5, pp 2023-2033 Date: 13 Oct 2011

<sup>20</sup> Dwivedi, S. C., Mathur, M., 2000. "Investigation of five plants for ovicidal effect against the pulse beetle, *Callosobruchus chinensis* (L.)" *Pestology* 24, 19 - 22

<sup>21</sup> Dwivedi, S. C., Kumari, A., 2000. "Laboratory evaluation of eight floral species inhibiting egg hatching in diamondback Moth, *Plutella xylostella* (L.) (*Lepidoptera, Plutellidae*)" *Pestology* 24, 36 - 39

<sup>22</sup> M. El-Basheir and Mahmoud A. H. Fouad (2002) A Preliminary Pilot survey on Head Lice, Pediculosis in Sharkia Governate and Treatment of Lice with Natural Plant Extracts." *Journal of the Egyptian Society of Parasitology*, Vol 32, No 3, December 2002, Zeinab

Ridding the hair of a head lice infestation with henna WILL dye the hair. In dark haired people, this will not make a perceptible difference in color. Compound henna, chemical henna, and adulterated henna will be ineffective and may harm hair or the person.



Head lice are evolving resistance to chemical cures. Henna has been used effectively against head lice in folk remedies for centuries, and does not seem to have reduced effectiveness.

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## **Ancient Sunrise® Henna for Hair Chapter 13, Henna and Your Health**

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