

It'll make your hair curl!

The perm is back, but this time it's grown-up, sophisticated and won't leave your hair dry and frazzled. Sarah Purcell reports on how big hair has grown up for the 2000s



Big hair and curls are back in fashion. Modern perms are more natural-looking.

The perm revival

While some style experts attribute the perm's comeback to the popular BBC series, *Ashes to Ashes*, starring Keeley Hawes with an impressively retro bubbly hairdo, hairdressers believe we're all just bored of poker-straight hair and fancy a change. "It

may in part be down to the Eighties revival in fashion and music, but we've had years of straight hair and now women want curls and big hair again. Look in any fashion magazine and you'll see the proof," says Karine Jackson of Karine Jackson Hair & Beauty in London's West End. In her salon, Karine has seen numbers of women asking for curly perms increase rapidly, from just five in 2007, to over 70 this year. "I think straight hair is definitely going out of fashion," says



Gemma Hensman, director of Hensmans Salons, Northampton. "The new perms now available will give women the looser, more natural curly styles they want."

Why the new perms aren't scary

As someone who had a full-on head of permed hair back in the Eighties, the word "perm" brings back memories of nasty-smelling chemicals and waiting while the hairdresser unravelled masses of tiny rollers to reveal the new, curly me. "Don't be afraid of the new perms. The harsh chemicals previously used that damaged hair have been replaced with gentle solutions," reassures Claire Benson, co-director of the Benson Hefti Partnership salon, in Leeds.

Charlie Taylor, director of Charlie Taylor Hair Health & Beauty salons in Scotland, agrees. "Today's new perms are streets ahead of those we used in the Eighties. The main difference is that, while they used to contain alkaline-based solutions, today they use acid solutions, which are much kinder to your hair."

Acid-based solutions can be used on coloured and highlighted hair, too, without causing damage. "The solutions we use in our salon are ammonia-free and contain conditioning agents that care for your hair. The results are much more natural looking as a result," says Karine Jackson.

"The solutions smell much nicer these days because of the different chemicals used," explains Leonie Northey, owner and director of Bristol-based salon, Cococheno. "We also tend to use larger rollers and perming rods today to give a looser, softer curl."

How do perms work?

A perm works by applying perming solution to break down the protein structures of your hair, whether naturally curly or straight. Your stylist then puts your hair into its new shape, using perming rods or rollers, and allows the new shape to develop. Finally, a neutralising agent is applied to your hair to lock in the new shape.

Which type of perm for curls and waves?

Curly perm — This will give you curls, but much softer and looser than the tight styles of the Eighties. Stylists now use much bigger rollers and perm rods to give larger curls or waves. You can then straighten them if you fancy a change of style.

Demi-perm or body wave — This gives soft, subtle waves, rather than curls. You can have it done all over, or just in sections to add body.

Root lift perm — This technique just perms the roots of your hair and doesn't give curl. What it does is lift your hair to give it more volume and make it easier to style and blow-dry.

New semi-perms — These are great for anyone nervous about perms. "The curls can be created with curling tongs or perming rods to get the look you want. They last for up to eight weeks and drop out gradually and less obviously than with other perms," says Gemma Hensman.

If you have short hair... "I'd advise a root perm to give lift, or a demi-wave to add gentle waves, as a curly perm won't be flattering on short hair," says Charlie Taylor.

If you have medium-length hair... "Go for a perm that will give soft, loose waves that aren't too regimented. It will work well with a layered style that frames your face," says Charlie Taylor.



There's a perm for every length and style of hair

If you have long hair... "A spiral perm looks fantastic on long hair, but remember you'll still have to style it to get it looking its best," says

Charlie Taylor. "A perm that alternates tighter with looser curls is a more natural look for longer hair," says Karine Jackson.

Straightening perms

If you battle with frizzy hair a straightening perm could be the answer. There are several types:

Straightening perm — This uses the same kind of technology as for a curly perm, but the hair is straightened with straightening irons after the chemical solution is applied. It isn't suitable for Afro or bleached hair. "It's best for soft, but frizzy, hair types and it can be used on colour-treated hair, too," says Leonie Northey.

Relaxer perm — "This is great for Afro hair types and will get hair beautifully smooth and straight," says Leonie Northey. It works by breaking down the hair bonds that cause hair to curl.

Permanent blow-dry — "Great for all types of frizzy hair, it makes hair easier to style and gives it more movement, too," says Leonie Northey. It works by heat-pressing keratin (hair's natural protein) deep into the hair cuticle to leave it frizz-free and shiny.

Looking after permed hair

You need to take special care of permed hair to keep it in good condition. "Use the conditioning products that go with the type of perm you've had, which your hairdresser can advise you on. You need to use an intensive conditioner once or

twice weekly, in addition to your regular conditioner," says Charlie Taylor.

Allow a minimum of three months in between perming treatments to avoid damaging your hair.

If you have a curly perm you'll need to use styling products designed to enhance curls to get it looking its best — don't expect to be able to just wash and leave it to dry.



Try: 1 John Frieda Frizz-Ease Dream Curls Curl Perfecter (£4.79), 2 Samy Get Curls Re-Energizing Crème (£4.99, Superdrug), 3 Aussie Dual Personality Curl Definition Soft Feel Serum (£4.49), 4 Tresemmé Flawless Curls Curl Activator Mist (£4.20), 5 Charles Worthington Results Curl Definition Cream (£4.55).