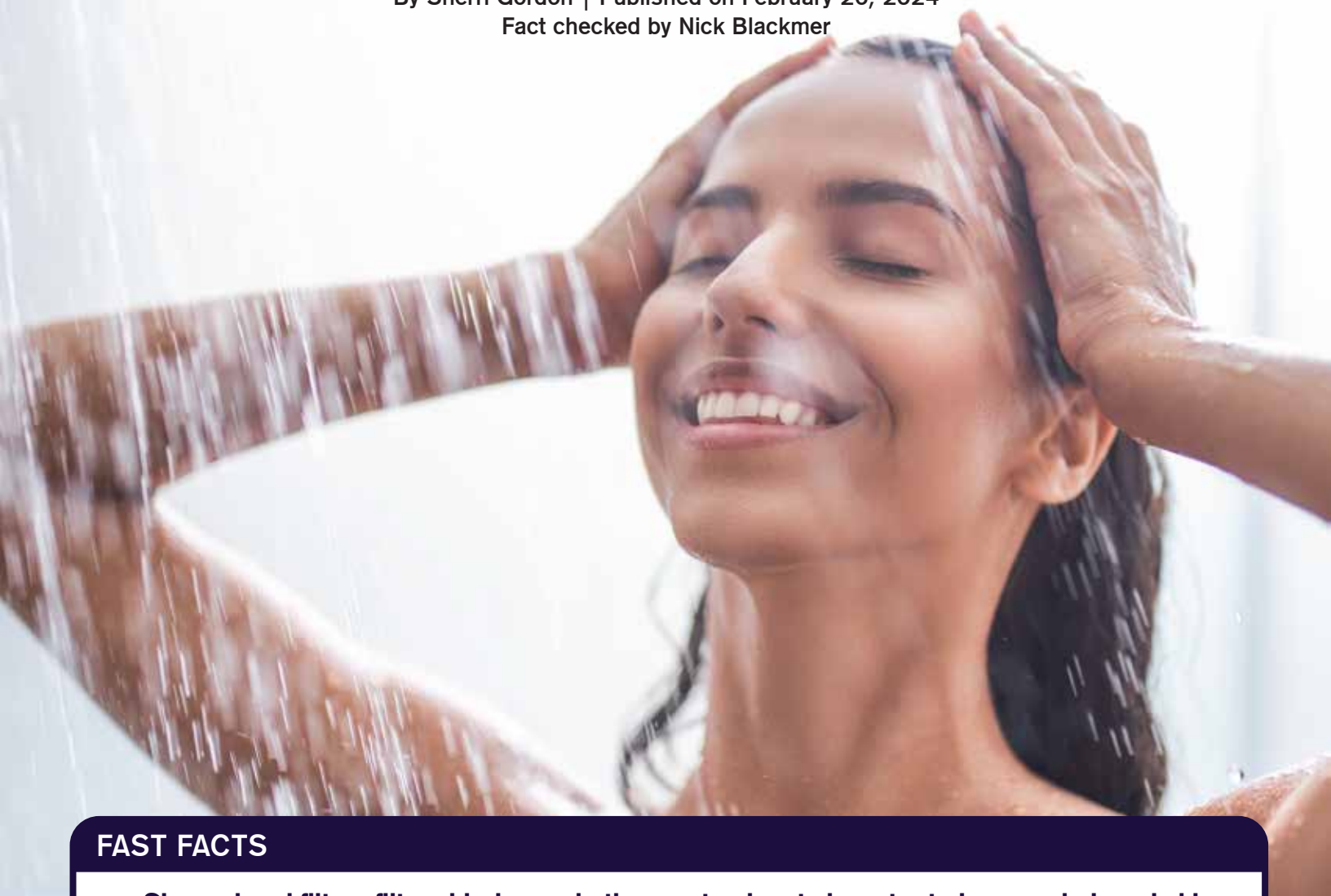


## Filtered Showerheads Claim to Improve Skin and Hair Health—But Do You Really Need One?

By Sherri Gordon | Published on February 26, 2024  
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### FAST FACTS

- Showerhead filters filter chlorine and other contaminants in water to improve hair and skin health.
- Showerhead filters are not regulated, making verifying their claims and effectiveness difficult.
- Experts recommend consulting a dermatologist to decide whether or not a filtered showerhead is best for your scalp care.

### Can using a filtered showerhead make a difference for your health?

If you have spent any amount of time on social media, you have likely been bombarded with ads praising showerhead filters as a means for helping with skin issues like psoriasis, acne, and dry skin, as well as dry hair and hair loss.

## But do they really work?

Showerhead filters are comparable to the filters used to improve the taste of tap water and can remove impurities in municipal water sources such as chlorine and chloramines, which are disinfectants added to public water sources.<sup>[1]</sup>

These filters also are purported to remove minerals, too, like magnesium, copper, and more.

But because showerheads are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there is little evidence that they do everything they claim to do.

In fact, a recent study concluded that sellers of showerhead filters may be misleading consumers on the extent to which their showerheads work.<sup>[2]</sup>

“Without comprehensive data from [these companies], it’s challenging to fully validate their claims,” Deeptej Singh, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and founder of Sandia Dermatology, told *Health*.

Here’s how unfiltered shower water may impact your well-being, as well as what to consider when purchasing a showerhead filter.



## How Does Unfiltered Water Impact Hair and Skin?

Water that is high in calcium and magnesium and other minerals is considered hard water and is a consistent issue for the more than 90% of U.S. households that get their water from community water systems.<sup>[3] [4]</sup>

Not only can hard water leave a residue of soap on your skin and in your hair, but it also takes more product to get your hair and body clean.<sup>[3]</sup>

Likewise, chlorine and other chemicals found in municipal water also can strip the skin and hair of its natural oils, leading to visible dryness, Dendy Engelman, MD, FACMS, FAAD, a board-certified cosmetic dermatologist and Mohs surgeon with Shafer Clinic, told *Health*.

Engelman said that these chemicals can also deplete hair's natural strength, and unintentionally change color-treated hair.

Filtering out these harmful microbes, bacteria, and fungi can help reduce clogged pores and acne. Engelman explained that filtering shower water can also support a healthy scalp, which can encourage hair growth and softer, shinier hair.

“Those with skin conditions such as eczema, rosacea, and psoriasis can be even more prone to irritation when their shower water contains harmful chemicals,” she said.

A 2016 study found that showering with hard water can damage hair. Participants washed their hair either in hard water or distilled water; researchers noted that the hair washed in hard water had a ruffled appearance with higher mineral deposition and decreased thickness.<sup>[5]</sup>

Meanwhile, a 2018 study found that hard water can weaken hair strands compared with deionized water. This leads to the hair breaking and thinning.<sup>[6]</sup>

Hard water also can increase your risk of atopic dermatitis.<sup>[7]</sup>

## How Do Showerhead Filters Work?

Filtered showerheads are designed to target common impurities found in tap water such as chlorine, heavy metals, sediments, and sometimes even bacteria, Jody Alpert Levine, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and director of dermatology at Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC told Health.

“The specific filtration components can vary between products, and some may also address additional contaminants like sulfur, iron, or chloramine,” she said.

While individual experiences may vary, there is evidence to suggest that using a filtered shower head can lead to improvements in skin conditions and hair health.

“Filtering out impurities from water can contribute to healthier skin and hair by maintaining the natural balance and moisture levels,” Levine said.

She recommends showerheads that selectively filter harmful substances while retaining essential minerals, like those with multi-stage filtration systems.

## Do You Need a Showerhead Filter?

Ultimately, deciding whether or not you need a showerhead filter is a personal decision.

Some people choose to use water softeners or other water filtration systems instead of buying a showerhead filter. Others prefer the simplicity of installing a showerhead filter, especially if they are renting and cannot install a water softener.

Overall, look for signs that your regular showering process is causing problems.

For instance, if your skin feels extremely dry and itchy after showering, or if your hair is dry, dull, and loses color quickly it might be due to the chlorine or hard water minerals and you could benefit from some sort of softening or water filtration process.

If you don't want to purchase a showerhead filter, Levine suggests using moisturizing shampoos and conditioners to help counteract the drying effects of hard water on hair and applying hydrating skincare products post-shower can benefit the skin.

If you do decide a showerhead filter is right for you, Engelman recommends checking longevity, water flow rate, mineral retention, and the science behind the filtration.

“Consulting your dermatologist is also a great way to verify effectiveness from a skin, hair, and nail perspective,” she said.

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