



## Chelydra

*"Dancer With An Attitude"*

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### **Longer, Healthier, Happier Hair & Nails**

People who know me would probably rate me as the person least likely to write an article of the *"Toward a Better You"* genre.

Beauty tips? Me? You have to put a gun to my head to get any makeup on my face ... but life is full of surprises.

This article is intended for those readers who, like me, have tissue-thin fingernails, and fine, curly hair that never seems to grow.

Let's start with **hair**. I have always been frustrated in my quest to grow a long, luxuriant head of hair. It would get to just below shoulder length, and stop dead in its tracks. Nothing I did seemed to persuade it to grow another millimeter.

Until about two years ago. At that time, the absolute worst happened. My stylist, the woman who understood my hair & I, the woman whom I had followed hither and yon across the wilds of the Virginia Peninsula, quit. And so the search for a new stylist began.

My sister-in-law recommended her beautician, an outgoing lady who would actually come to your home and cut your hair. Well, the first thing this woman asked me was: "Do you wear your hair in a ponytail frequently?" Since I hadn't sported a ponytail in at least three years, the safe answer was "No".

Fortunately, I followed this "no" with the all-important question: "Why do you ask?" It turns out that my hair was breaking off quite liberally just below my ears - right about ponytail level. Further investigation revealed three flaws in my hair care regimen:

- I was using a fine-toothed comb.
- I was combing my curly locks from the top down (where it would tangle and break just below my ears).
- I was in the habit of briskly towel-drying my hair.

Well, I have mended my ways, and made the following changes in my hair habits:

- I now use a rounded-end, wide-toothed comb.
- I use a detangler/creme rinse after shampooing.
- I use the towel only to squeeze excess water from my hair after shampooing.

-I comb my hair from the bottom up.

My hair is now noticeably longer, thicker, and healthier, with almost no split ends. It's still a slow process - curly hair has to grow 2-4 inches before it appears to be an inch longer in length - but at least I can see that I'm making progress!

I discovered a solution to my paper-thin fingernails dilemma almost as accidentally as I found the solution to my stubborn hair. I started out by doing something really stupid. I left my dental retainers in a hotel in Maryland on a business trip. So, there I was, cooling my heels in the orthodontist's office, waiting to get molds taken for new retainers. I started paging through one of those home-remedy self-help books, and one of the entries was on how to strengthen weak fingernails.

The book noted that only one dietary supplement had ever been proven effective in strengthening nails - Biotin, taken in a dose of at least 2500 micrograms per day. The book also noted that nails which chipped frequently were probably dry, and recommended massaging your nails with vegetable oil on a regular basis.

After I left the dentist's office, I trundled off to the local health food store, and stocked up on Biotin. (Your other choice is to eat a head of cauliflower every day!)

While I was waiting for my new nails to grow out (it takes about six months), I also started daily oil massages of my fingertips. I saw an immediate difference in my nails. They still chipped frequently, but I would only lose a piece of the nail, not the whole thing.

And now that six months have passed, I can verify that my nails are definitely stronger than before.

In the midst of all of this, I also treated myself to a manicure. I learned from the manicurist that nails are filed into three basic shapes: square, rounded square, and pointed oval. Of these, the strongest is the square shape, and the weakest is the pointed oval. My nails are still too thin for the square shape (the corners fray), but rounded square is perfect.

That sums up my "adventures in beauty" over the last year. I hope that it helps some of you toward longer hair and stronger nails.