



Bridal Beauty

Countdown to Perfection

Written by Nayda Rondon

Every bride dreams of walking down the aisle in radiant splendor. Make sure that's how it plays out in real life by following our month-by-month tips.

6 Months: Start recruiting your beauty team. Consult with hair style ideas and treatments. Show them photos of your dress and headwear. "We'll provide a total look, considering type condition of hair; if it's short, whether she might want extensions; if she colors, how the shade complements her skin tone and how it will show up under camera lighting," explains Antonio Prieto, whose eponymous salon in Chelsea (antonioprietosalon.com) offers exclusive bridal services, including Bodas (Spanish for wedding). He urges brides to select they feel comfortable with. "Most women know what looks good on them. If you don't feel beautiful, don't be shy about asking for another look. Updos are an art form, but this is not a hairdresser showing his skill; it's about making you look your best." Rather than doing both simultaneously, Prieto suggests going for a hair consultation, then scheduling another for makeup. "It's nice to break it up so you can concentrate on one at a time," he notes.

Don't neglect repair and maintenance. Schedule trims and conditioning treatments every six to eight weeks, suggests Prieto.

We can recommend a color and cut to be maintained right up to the honeymoon," says Helene of Helene: The Art of Makeup (www.heleneartofmakeup.com), which offers private in-studio wedding services as well as traveling hairstyling and makeup professionals. Book cut and color appointments for the upcoming month. At this time, also book your trial with hair and makeup stylists who will be taking care of you on your wedding day.

Work with a licensed aesthetician, a dietitian, and a certified as trainer to develop customized programs. If possible, find a center that offers all three for "one-stop shopping" convenience, recommends Eileen Dervisevic, spa manager, Splash Spa at The Sports Club/LA (www.thesportsclubla.com) in Manhattan.

Go the full measure and visit a dermatologist. "Skin is the window into the body. We want to come up with a customized program of in-office treatments, in conjunction with a home skin care and nutrition regimen, that will result in beautiful, glowing skin any, bride would love," says Dr. Jody Alpert Levine, a New York City dermatologist. She reports that hair removal and skin peels are the most popular services with her brides-to-be. For best results, she recommends a series of treatments, starting six months ahead of the big day. "Never, ever do anything drastic to your skin on short notice, especially not at such an important time," she warns. "Start gradually to allow for skin tolerance to build up." For instance, hair removal can leave red bumps around the follicles; don't schedule a bikini treatment any sooner than a week before the honeymoon. For hair on the face, allow a month to clear.

When it comes to photo facials or light glycolic peels—great for clarifying skin and adding wonderful texture and tone—Dr. Alpert Levine suggests monthly treatments, stopping a month before for photo facials and two weeks before for glycolic peels. For brides with acne conditions, she prescribes a series of salicylic acid peels, again with a six-month lead.

Work with a fitness trainer to develop a customized exercise program. "We'll do a full-body evaluation to test for things like body fat ratios, measurements, weight, etc., so we know where we stand and can track progress,"





says Lauren Goldberg, a trainer at PEAK Performance (www.peakperformancenyc.com) in New York City. She emphasizes the benefits of a full-body program rather than one that only targets certain body parts. Based on individual fitness levels and specific goals, Goldberg will devise weekly in-gym routines, as well as at-home segments focusing on cardio and strength training. "We'll go from intense to simple and back again with different durations." Nutrition counseling is also part of the fitness plan. "If you're working out but not eating healthy, you're not getting maximum benefits."

5 Months: Follow through on skin and nutrition programs; make any necessary adjustments. For skin-sational results, Dervisevic recommends booking packages of monthly treatments: a series of six facials and six massages. How about a Splash signature facial, suitable for all skin types?

4 Months: Schedule a makeup lesson to test products, colors, and overall look. Book a trial hairstyle session. Have your skincare specialist recommend an at-home regimen for your particular skin type, counsels Helene, who notes a good routine will include cleanser, toner, and a hydrating moisturizer with SPF (all applied twice a day), and a mild exfoliant once a week

3 Months: Visit your stylist for any needed color and finishing services. For extra shine and body, Helene advises a clear gloss. For ultra soft skin, indulge in an all-over body scrub. Another Dervisevic pick: a coconut oil hair/scalp treatment.

2 Months: Book a second makeup and hair consultation. "This will give you a choice of two different styles," explains Helene, who adds you should also book your bridal party's appointments or get information for them to do on their own.

1 Month: Treat yourself to another spa treatment: Dervisevic suggests a body detoxification treatment—ideal for ladies with acne on back and/or shoulders—if your gown has a revealing cut; or a firming body wrap, just the thing to tone and lift. Brides opting for open-heeled shoes or sandals—or those going barefoot at a beachside ceremony—will put their best foot forward with an exfoliating foot treatment.

2 Weeks: In the fitness department, begin tapering off "We'll just do cardio and simple exercises to stay on course and work off any pre-wedding nerves," Goldberg says.

1 Week: Go in for eyebrow arching, waxing and a facial (word to the wedding wise: steer clear of deep-cleansing facials, which may cause redness and swelling). To subtly accentuate eyes, Prieto suggests eyelash extensions; for hair that'll look its shiniest, he advises highlights. Helene recommends a clear glaze.

4 Days: Pick up accessories and other essentials you'll need for your hair and makeup, Helene says. Relax with a de-stress massage and body cocoon, an exfoliating and deeply relaxing wrap, or the mind-body experience, a multi-sensory indulgence to soothe and restore energy levels and help induce sleep, suggests Dervisevic.

1 Day: Get a manicure, pedicure, and a paraffin hand treatment for extra softness, says Helene, who urges: "Get to bed early as the next day will be a long one!"

Day of: Enjoy in-salon—or better yet—travel-to-you hair and make-up sessions. Smile, relax, and let your inner radiance shine forth!