

Swim Bag: Chlorine-Removal Personal Products

Product manufacturers and retailers provide the products reviewed in Swim Bag to SWIMMER at no cost.

BY LAURA HAMEL

We last tested chlorine-removal personal products in 2010, and some of those same products are reviewed again here, along with a few newcomers.

Chlorinated pool water and seawater both contribute to skin and hair dryness and hair breakage. And although some swimmers consider smelling like chlorine all day a badge of honor, our testers were thrilled to find products that removed it from their hair and skin.

In general, chlorine-removal products use ingredients that neutralize or sequester harsh chemicals (chlorine, chloramines, metals, minerals, salt, etc.), making them easy to rinse away. A detailed analysis of the chemistry behind these products is beyond the scope of this review. Some of our testers with color-treated or processed hair, on the advice of their hair-care professionals, eschew shampoos containing sulfates. Two of the brands we tested met that criterion: Malibu C and Reflect Sports.

Every single product tested had positive and negative comments on some aspect: “great lather but didn’t like the smell,” “great smell but didn’t like the lather” (for the same product). So we’ve aggregated responses and tried to identify trends. All the products were successful at drastically reducing or eliminating chlorine smell from skin and hair.

There were scent preferences expressed during testing—we included scent keywords, knowing that only your nose knows what it likes.



SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER (TWO STEPS)

1. Malibu C Swimmers' Wellness Shampoo and Conditioner | malibuc.com | \$14 and \$14 (Or \$28 for pack with free Wellness treatments included)

As it did in 2010, Malibu C's product line as a whole gets excellent reviews—it's ranked consistently as a tester favorite. The shampoo and conditioner also come in a combo pack with a once-weekly treatment (see separate review).

Tester comments: “Great scent, not overpowering.” “Left hair feeling soft, natural, with body.” “Made my hair feel silky and smooth.” “Thick and creamy.” “Better absorbed than most conditioners.”

Scent words: light, fresh, sweet, orange, delicious, Creamsicle

2. Reflect Sports Reflect H₂O Swim Shampoo and Conditioner | reflectsports.com | \$14 and \$16

Also a hit with testers last time, the Reflect Sports line gained some new fans, as good shine and manageability were reported after use. Like Malibu C, Reflect Sports is sulfate-free, which testers with processed hair preferred.

Tester comments: “Hair feels and smells great.” “More expensive but the quality is great.” “Practical and reliable product.” “My hair was left clean and smooth.” “I like everything about this product.” “My hair stylist loves this product for my heavily processed hair.”

Scent words: light, fresh, neutral, rain

3. SBR TRISWIM Shampoo and Conditioner | tri-swim.com | \$12 and \$15

TRISWIM also received great reviews in both the 2010 and 2014 testing periods, and is consistently ranked as a favorite among testers. The TRISWIM line includes body wash and lotion (see separate reviews). The travel “shot” collection that includes all four products is perfect for weekend swim travel.

Tester comments: “Hair felt soft and silky after using it.” “Quick and lots of lather.” “Nice airy, sudsy feel.” “Very lush feeling.”

Scent words: fresh, strong, clean, citrusy, licorice, Easter

4. Touch Out Sports Moisturizing Shampoo and Conditioner for Water Sports | touchoutsports.com | \$16 and \$15

New to SWIMMER testing, Touch Out shampoo received great reviews for its lather, which was described as very thick and rich, but most testers didn't like the scent. Testers also liked the thickness of the conditioner, although its scent was a bit too heavy for some.

Tester comments: “Hair felt manageable but dry.” “Loved this product.” “Hair felt clean and manageable.” “No frizz!”

Scent words: strong, honeysuckle, pineapple, perfume, thick

5. UltraSwim Chlorine Removal Shampoo and Ultra Repair Conditioner | ultraswim.com | \$5.25 and \$4

UltraSwim has been around a long time and several testers who had used it as age-groupers said they still love it. At a fraction of the cost of some of the other products tested, UltraSwim is an excellent value.

Tester comments: “My all-time favorite.” “Too heavily scented for me.” “My hair felt soft and clean after use.”

Scent words: strong, heavy, perfume, tangy

6. Water Gear Swim & Sport Neutralizing Shampoo/Body Wash and Rebalance Hair Conditioner | watergear.com | \$9 and \$9

Water Gear's scents were popular with testers, as were the performance and value.

Tester comments: “Smelled good and lathered well.” “Hair felt clean and fresh after one use.” “Pleasantly surprised.” “Great lather.” “Great buy for your buck.”

Scent words: tangy, light, natural, yummy



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SHAMPOO-CONDITIONER BLENDS (TWO-IN-ONE)

These two-in-one products are great for anyone who doesn't regularly use a conditioner (a lot of our male testers), anyone wanting fewer bottles in the swim bag, and when grabbing a quick shower at the beach after an open water swim. Some of our testers who regularly use a two- or three-step shampoo/conditioner/leave-in conditioner regimen (a lot of our female testers) said they would use a two-in-one for short travel because of the convenience of packing fewer products, but would not give up their separate conditioners for too long, as the two-in-ones didn't condition as well as a separate conditioner.

Testers loved the bottle shape of both these two-in-one products: the tall, thin, cylindrical bottles were easy to store in the top-loading side pockets of swim bags—they didn't take up a lot of room and were easy to grab.

7. Barracuda Aqua Swimmers' Shampoo and Conditioner | barracudausa.com | \$8.5

Tester comments: "Suds up nicely." "I had my doubts about a one-step product, but worked well." "My hair feels much softer."

Scent words: pleasant, subtle, sugary, SweetTarts

8. Summer Solutions One Step Swimmers Shampoo and Conditioner | sumsolinc.com | \$6

Tester comments: "Performed quite well." "No more chlorine smell!" "Left my hair feeling very soft and fairly easy to manage."

Scent words: light, sweet, rain, cucumber

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FOR Masters Swimmers
BY Masters Swimmers



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BODY WASH AND GEL

Yes, you can use your shampoo to wash your skin, and many swimmers do so to reduce the number of bottles in their swim bags. But hair care is more complex than skin care, and some of the ingredients in your shampoo are simply not needed on your skin. In addition, using a shampoo on your skin can leave it slightly slimy, which makes shaving in the shower more difficult.

9. Barracuda Aquia Showering Body Gel | barracudausa.com | \$8.5

Tester comments: “Great scent.” “Thick and luxurious.” “Lathered well.”

Scent words: citrus, cucumber, tropical

10. SBR TRISWIM Body Wash | tri-swim.com | \$12

Tester comments: “The best body wash ever.” “Loved the scent.” “Foamed up nicely.” “No residue.” “My favorite product of everything we tested.”

Scent words: light, grapefruit, tangy, citrus

11. Summer Solutions Swimmer’s Own Shower Gel | sumsolinc.com | \$6

Tester comments: “Very light, liked the scent and feel.” “Really liked this product line.”

Scent words: fresh, sweet, rain

12. Summer Solutions Moisturizing Bar Soap | sumsolinc.com | \$5

Testers who prefer bar soaps loved this lightly scented bar and said that they would use it at home, but wouldn’t carry it in their swim bags, as bar soaps are harder to travel with.

Tester comments: “Great lather.” “Didn’t leave any stickiness.” “Creamy and nice, light scent.”

Scent words: light, fresh, coconut, natural

Summer Solutions Swim Wipes | sumsolinc.com | \$1

The testers who liked this product the best were the open water swimmers who weren’t always able to get a shower at the beach before the weekly post-swim breakfast. A few testers kept them in their swim bags for emergencies, but most didn’t find a daily use for them. Also, the scent was a bit stronger than the other Summer Solutions products reviewed.

Tester comments: “A little too perfumy.” “Would be great between swim and shower, but wouldn’t use every day.”

Scent words: Strong, floral

13. Swim Spray | swimspray.com | \$15

Swim Spray is an odorless all-over body and hair spray made of ascorbic acid (vitamin C). Testers were skeptical at first, but found that it really works. Swim Spray goes on with a slightly tingly feeling, but when washed away, leaves hair and skin free of chlorine smell. This is a good product for the minimalist swimmer who is unlikely to purchase a set of chlorine-removal hair care or skincare products.

LOTION

14. SBR TRISWIM Lotion | tri-swim.com | \$12

TRISWIM’s lotion, with its creamy thickness and light lemony scent, continues to be an all-time tester favorite. It goes on thick but absorbs well and completely relieves the dry skin chlorine itches.



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Tester comments: “Great product!” “Great scent and very thick.” “Loved the feel; absorbed well.”

Scent words: light, lemon, delicious

15. Summer Solutions Moisture Therapy Body Lotion | sumsolinc.com | \$6

The Summer Solutions line was new to SWIMMER testing and the light, slightly tropical scents were well received.

Tester comments: “Really like the smoothness.” “Light, not greasy or oily.” “Hours later, my skin is still moisturized.”

Scent words: light coconut, tropical

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SPECIAL TREATMENTS

Malibu C has an entire line of products seemingly designed to spoil swimmers with special spa-like treatments at home. Testers loved these products, although not all are designed for daily use.

16. Malibu C Swimmers Wellness | malibuc.com | Included with shampoo/conditioner box set, or \$3.5 each or \$42 box of 12

These packets contain a crystalline powder that foams up and is supposed to remove chemical build-up. Everyone who had not been using a chlorine-removal shampoo who used one of these noticed an immediate difference in the softness, shine, and manageability of their hair.

Malibu C Miracle Repair Reconstructor | malibuc.com | \$2.5 each or \$30 box of 12

These packets of extra-rich conditioner made an immediate difference for testers who had a bit of sun and chlorine damage. As with the Wellness packets, the Reconstructor is not for daily use.

17. Malibu C B5 Face & Body Moisture Mist | malibuc.com | \$24

This product is designed to hydrate in conjunction with lotion, not replace it. It sprays on light, is absorbed quickly, and should be followed by your normal moisturizer.

Tester comments: "Very light and protective." "Perfect for at night for re-moisturizing skin without using something heavy." "Love this!" "Buying some tonight."

Scent words: light, rain

Malibu C Leave-In Mist Conditioner | malibuc.com | \$14

Testers reported more good hair days after using this leave-in conditioner.

Tester comments: "Made my hair easy to manage and it stayed nice the rest of the day." "Kept my hair from becoming frizzy." "Did not feel heavy or sticky." "Left my hair very smooth."

Scent words: light

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PRESWIM CONDITIONERS

Swimmers who use preswim hair conditioners swear by them and claim their hair stylists can't detect any chlorine damage—hair is protected from the water before immersion. They're easy to use, but do require a few minutes before practice to wet hair and apply before donning a swim cap. They're thicker than regular conditioners and, for the most part, don't cause your cap to slide around too much. During our 2010 testing, Naturceutics Nature's Prescription (not tested in 2014) became a tester favorite. We also tested Reflect Sports in 2010, but Philip Kingsley is new to SWIMMER.

18. Philip Kingsley Swimcap | philipkingsley.com | \$35

Swimcap is very thick and completely protects hair under the cap. The scent was a little too strong for some, but the protection was great.

Scent words: perfume, thick, lavender

19. Reflect Sports Reflect H₂O Pre-Swim and Sun Protecting Gel | reflectsports.com | \$15

Reflect's gel is very light and pleasant smelling, and not quite as thick as Swimcap or Nature's Prescription. Testers found it a little slippery, but caps, for the most part, stayed on.

Scent words: light, rain, juniper

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