

How to Get the Darkest Color Henna Tattoos

by Jody of ShopBeachcombers.com

Everyone wants super dark color from their henna tattoos. I want to help you achieve this, but keep in mind henna isn't all about color. It's about connecting (with others or just yourself) and contributing to a positive energy within and around us. Henna can be as powerful as you let it!

Back to dark color henna! There are many factors that contribute to the color you ultimately get from your henna. I'm going to address most of them here.

1. The Henna Product Itself

Mixing your own henna from powder is capable of giving you the darkest longest lasting color. I suggest

[Jamila professional body art quality henna](#) or our [organic Rajasthani henna powder](#), and the Beachcombers Favorite recipe. Here is a rundown of the recipe I personally use...



One hundred grams of henna powder will yield 75-150 henna tattoos depending on the size of the designs you create. If you are new to henna, I suggest mixing smaller batches (25-30 grams), so you can play with your henna recipe to find what works best for you.

1. Mix approximately equal parts henna and lemon juice (bottled lemon juice, such as RealLemon). For 100 grams of henna, you will use 1-1.75 cups of lemon juice *total* in your recipe. *For the first step do not mix all the lemon juice.* You are looking for a really thick texture like thick mashed potatoes. The henna should be too thick to use, as we'll be adding more liquid later to our mix.

Why? The acid in the lemon juice releases the dye in the henna (lawsone).

2. Apply plastic wrap over henna and press down so that the wrap touches henna paste to remove as much air as possible. Set aside in a warm area to await dye release.

Time for dye release:

It takes different amounts of time for different types of henna to release dye. It can take anywhere from 4-48 hours (or longer) for dye release depending on the henna and the temperature. The warmer the temperature, the quicker the dye release. If it's colder, it will take longer to achieve dye release.

Jamila Henna: generally has full dye release in 24-48 hours (no straining needed)

Rajasthani Organic: generally has full dye release in 6-24 hours

General Henna: generally most henna's release dye in 4-24 hours

Note: Generally, the longer the henna takes to release full dye, the more stable the henna and the longer it will take the henna paste to start losing it's dyeing abilities.

Ways to check for dye release:

- a. When the top of the henna has a nice brown skin with the fresh green henna under the surface, your dye has been released. *Double check these results with one of the below methods.*
- b. Place a paper towel on top of the plastic wrap. When there is a nice orange stain on the paper towel, you have dye release.
- c. Place a small dot of henna on the palm of your hand. Leave it for a few minutes and wipe it off. If there is a nice orange stain, you have dye release.

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3. Mix table sugar into the paste in a ratio of about 1 part sugar to 4, 5, or 6 parts henna paste. This is optional. You can mix your henna without sugar, but I find it is best with sugar. Different brands of henna may require more or less sugar.

Why? The sugar makes the henna stay wet against the skin longer and stick to the skin better, thus helping you achieve a darker stain. It also helps give your henna a great consistency. You may find you like more or less sugar with different brands of henna. This is not absolutely needed, so feel free to try mixing your henna without sugar if you'd like.

4. Mix essential oils into the paste (equal amounts tea tree and lavender). If you are mixing 100 grams of henna you can use anywhere from half of each bottle to all the oil provided. If you are not using our oils, 1/3 - 1 ounce (60-150 drops) of oil will work well for 100 grams of henna.

Why? Both lavender and tea tree oils have monoterpene alcohols which will help release more of the lawsone dye in your henna resulting in a darker stain. Adding oils also adds a lovely scent to your henna and helps with the texture of your henna.

5. Mix henna completely. Add additional lemon juice if your henna needs to be thinned. Add more henna powder if you need your henna paste thicker. You are going for a texture of anywhere between yogurt and honey, depending on your personal taste.
6. Place plastic wrap on henna again, and set aside for 2-24 hours to allow more dye to release. With Jamila you can get away with another 24 hours of dye release but with other brands keep a very close eye on the henna.

Why? Any henna, including Jamila, is able to be used after your oils have been added if full dye release had already been achieved. The reason we wait again is to allow the oils to pull more dye out of the henna molecules. Generally 4 hours is about perfect, but it's pretty flexible.

7. [Strain the henna](#), if needed. Generally **all henna** except Jamila henna will need to be strained to avoid clogs. Place the henna in a carrot bag or sandwich baggie with the tip cut so that you can transfer the henna to applicator bottles or cones.

NOTE: The colder it is in your house, the longer it takes to release the henna dye. The warmer your house, the quicker the dye release.

Tip: I fill individual cones with henna and freeze them so I always have fresh henna available. One hundred grams of henna powder will create 10-12 standard size large cones (up to 24 small cones). See storage information in the Beachcombers henna design book or at www.ShopHenna.com.

2. What Part of the Body You Henna

Henna takes best on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet. The further away from the feet and hands you get, the lighter the stain. The thinner the skin, the fewer layers of skin cells there are for the henna to stain, therefore you get a lighter stain.

That's ok, you can still do henna on the back or even the face, just know that it will be much lighter and not last as long.



3. The Skin Itself

Henna takes best to clean dry skin. Lotions, sunblock, or even water will be a barrier between the henna and the skin. Self tanner can be exceptionally difficult for henna to bond with. The more base (opposite of acidic) your skin is the darker your henna stain.

4. How Long You Leave the Moist Henna Paste in Contact with the Skin

The longer you leave the wet henna paste in contact with the skin, the darker and longer lasting the color. Ideally I like to see people shoot for 4-6 hours. Overnight is even better!

Use a sealer such as a [lemon sugar sealer](#). This will help you develop a nice crust on top of the henna while keeping the underside (that's in contact with your skin) of the henna moist.

5. The Warmth of Your Skin while the Paste is on the Skin

The warmer your skin, the darker your henna stain. I have low blood pressure and I'm always cold. It's much harder for me to get good henna color than it is for most people. Don't crank your air conditioning, and try to keep your body temperature up. Sit in the sun, have a glass of wine or hot tea, or wrap up in a blanket if you are like me, lol!

The best thing you can do to keep the henna area warm is to [seal and wrap your henna design](#), though this is completely optional. Don't feel you must do this. Dab on a lemon sugar solution to the henna as soon as it's dry enough to touch. Wrap the design in plenty of toilet paper to absorb sweat and then wrap plastic wrap around the toilet paper. This can yield crazy-good color!



6. How You Remove the Henna Paste

Don't use water to remove the henna from your skin. Either gently scrape it off with your fingers or use a little olive oil to remove the henna paste. Avoid water on the henna for the rest of the day if possible.

7. How Well You Care For the Henna Tattoo

Henna is a permanent stain. It doesn't fade away, your skin cells exfoliate off. Anything you do to avoid exfoliating the skin where your henna tattoo is located will help your henna last longer. Avoid water, cleaners, and anything else that may exfoliate the skin as much as possible (within good hygiene limits).

BTW, remember your henna will start off light, but will come up to full color over a couple of days. Be patient!



Wet henna paste still on skin.

The longer you leave the moist henna in contact with your skin the better and longer lasting your color. Keep the skin warm in that area to draw out as much dye in the henna as possible.



Henna stain the morning after paste removal.

Henna starts off light (sometimes REALLY light) but cures in your skin over a couple of days to come up to full color.



Henna stain 36 hours after henna paste removal.

Remember, henna is a permanent stain. It's doesn't fade away, your skin cells exfoliate off. ANYTHING you do that is exfoliating (swimming, facial cleaners, cleaning chemicals, rubbing clothing or shoes, will fade your henna design.

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