

descriptions

The cuticle is the outer covering. The scales of the cuticle may vary in number (how many there are), how much they overlap, their overall shape, and how much they protrude from the surface. The thickness of the cuticle may vary as well, and the cuticles of some species' hairs may contain pigment (color). Characteristics of the cuticle may be important in distinguishing between hairs of different species but are often not useful in distinguishing between different people.

The cortex varies in thickness, texture, and color. The cortex contains pigment granules. These give hair its color. The color and shape provide important points of comparison between the hair of different individuals. Generally, African American hair is curly and contains uneven pigment (color). Caucasian hair is usually straight or wavy, with a more even distribution of color. The cortex is perhaps the most important component in determining which individual a human hair may have come.

The medulla is a hollow tube that runs the length of the hair. Sometimes it is present, sometimes not. Sometimes the canal is continuous, while in other cases it is fragmented. For example, except for the Asian race, human head hairs usually have fragmented medullae or no medullae at all. Among Asians, head hair generally have continuous medullae. Animal hair has a characteristically thicker medulla and cuticle than in a human, since their hair is their means of warmth.