

# Henna

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Henna, or mendhi, is the process of dying human skin with a decorative design or pattern. It has been practiced for thousands of years.

Technically speaking, henna comes from the henna tree. The leaves are dried and ground to a powder and then mixed with a liquid, often water or lemon juice, to create a paste. The staining effect of henna paste is from the lawsone molecules released when the leaves are dried and crushed. Fresh henna tree leaves will not stain the skin.

Henna was originally celebrated and practiced in cultures near to where the henna tree grew naturally. Countries such as Algeria, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, India, Israel, Somalia, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen all have their own traditions for henna application. Many of these henna ceremonies are performed on brides, and sometimes grooms, in preparation for their wedding. In some ceremonies, a party is thrown as a way to bring the families together to celebrate and bring luck, fortune, fertility and happiness to the couple.

Because the henna tree grows in such a large geographic footprint, it is difficult to trace its specific point of origin in history, but can be dated back to the bronze age. Egyptian mummies have evidence of henna. Statues along the Mediterranean coastline dating back 2500-4500 years depict young women with markings on the arms and hands.

In our modern day and age, henna is still used in many bridal rituals throughout the world, but is also used in western culture at fairs and festivals.

### Sources

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