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Hair Removal

Nuisance hair. You can shave it, wax it, cream it, even zap it. Which is best?

The razor is, of course, your old standby. In a pinch, nothing's faster. If you have a little more time, exfoliate the skin for best results, says Susie Galvez of the Face Works Day Spa, Richmond, Va. Doing so will reduce the drag of the razor. In fact, enhance the results of any hair-removal method by first removing the dead skin surrounding the hair.

The only problem with a razor, we all know, is that it's a daily habit.

Waxing, on the other hand, leaves the skin smooth for up to four weeks. In her spa, Galvez uses a soy bean-based product and applies it at precisely 98.6 degrees to reduce the burn factor. This allows her to use the product over a greater area of the body than traditional waxes.

Immediately following the waxing, Galvez applies a finapil lotion to the treated area, a product she says helps to inhibit hair re-growth.

The downside of wax: "Even the so called 'ouchless' ones still zap you for a few seconds," Galvez says. "But as they say, no pain, no gain."

If you're too busy for the spa, then depilatory creams might be the answer. Simply apply the cream, wait a few minutes and, voila, no hair. Since the creams remove hair just to skin level, results may last only a week, though.

For a considerable investment -- up to a few thousand dollars depending on the area treated -- a laser can remove hair for months at a time. Be prepared, though -- Galvez says the feeling is "like a rubber band snapping on the skin." Ouch!

All this leads us to the only known permanent hair-removal method: electrolysis. In this procedure, a probe needle is inserted into the hair shaft, and a small current of electricity is administered to "cook" the follicle, Galvez says.

Because the hair is removed one at a time, electrolysis can take weeks or months. Tolerance is an issue, too, though Galvez says clients tell her it's less painful than annoying.

Set for something a little out of the ordinary? With "sugaring," a coating of sugar and other ingredients are applied to the skin's surface and rubbed vigorously to remove the hair at the surface. The method dates back to Biblical days and is effective, says Galvez, but messy too.

If you'd rather leave the hair intact, just make it less noticeable, you can bleach it. Buttermilk is a very mild bleaching agent; lemon juice is a bit stronger.

Oh, and about the myth that hair removed grows back thicker -- just the opposite is true, says Galvez. "Hair has a certain life cycle," she says. Remove it temporarily, and it actually returns more thinly and finer in texture.



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