

YOU.

TEND TO YOURSELF, BODY AND SOUL

HAIR REMOVAL
OPTIONS ARE A LOT
MORE VARIED (AND
SURPRISINGLY MORE
PLEASANT) THAN
THEY'VE EVER BEEN.

Hair Removal Questions, Answered

If you've let your body hair grow and you're good with it, more power to you! But if you're wanting to get back to a removal routine, read on for tools that will make the job easier, plus tips from dermatologists, just in time for the mother of all hairless hassles: beach season. ➔

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What Are the Latest Innovations?

A THOROUGH SCRUB

Exfoliating is helpful before any hair removal method. It scrubs away the dry dead skin cells that would otherwise prevent a smooth finish. Sugar crystals in (1) **Tree Hut Tropic Glow Firming Sugar Scrub** (\$9; ulta.com) do the job nicely, while the sweet almond and sandalwood scent conjures up a beach escape.

THE ULTIMATE BIKINI-LINE TOOL

This (2) **Fur Trimmer** (\$89; furyou.com) is the Tesla of trimmers: It has multiple blades, four guide lengths, and an LED spotlight. And because it's waterproof, you can take it into the shower, then store it on its charging base until next time.

AN AT-HOME PEACH-FUZZ SOLUTION

Dermaplaning, a spa treatment that removes peach fuzz or stray brow, lip, or chin hairs while exfoliating the top layer of skin, is easy to do at home with the (3) **Versed Instant Gratification At-Home Dermaplaning Tool** (\$20; versedskin.com). Glide the single-edge blade along the contours of your face at a 45-degree angle to safely lift away hair for glowier skin.

THE ALL-IN-ONE WASH

(4) **Gillette Venus 2-in-1 Cleanser + Shave Gel** (\$15; drugstores) doubles as body wash and shaving cream and, unlike some washes, is gentle enough for lady bits because it's fragrance-free and pH-balanced.

THIS DREAM CREAM

The stinky, burning depilatory creams you remember from years past have undergone a welcome upgrade. Smooth a thick layer of (5) **Nair Bladeless Shave Whipped Crème** (\$9; drugstores) onto legs, arms, pits, and/or bikini line and you'll be met with a lavender scent. Leave it on for up to ten minutes, then wipe hair away for nick- and razor-burn-free results that last a few days longer than shaving.

EASY RAZOR-BUMP PREVENTION

If your legs tend to be plagued by red, burning bumps whenever you shave, switch to a fresh blade; then, post-shave, swipe on an alpha- and beta-hydroxy-acid-infused pad, like (6) **European Wax Center Ingrown Hair Wipes** (\$28.50; shopwaxcenter.com). The exfoliating acids help to gently remove old skin cells that can cause hairs to grow inward and lead to inflammation.



Use this to trim, go bare, or be somewhere in between.

This nifty razor gets rid of unwanted hair on your face.



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Any Advice for Black Women?

Mom of two Jackson-Cannady recalls the shaving lesson she learned the hard way and asks Black dermatologists to share their best suggestions.

THE MOMENT my mother handed me the pink razor and the can of shaving cream, I was on top of the world. At 12 years old, I'd finally grown enough leg hair to shave it all off (the irony). Her one warning? "Never shave on dry skin." A few months later, those tailored words of wisdom flew right out the window when one of my white friends on the swim team grabbed her razor and dry-shaved her body in the locker room before a meet, encouraging me to do the same. "It's fine," she said, noticing my hesitation. "I do it all the time." I followed suit and we won the relay, but a few days later, as my hair began to grow back, I didn't feel like much of a winner. The smooth shave—that I'm convinced helped us garner gold—was replaced with dozens

of itchy, red bumps. I checked on my teammate. "I'm cool," she said.

That day, I got what my mom was trying to teach me: For Black women, prep is the most important step in shaving. Shaving cream acts as a buffer between skin and razor, which typically needs to pass over curly hair more than once to remove it. Multiple-blade razors (and methods like waxing and sugaring) can be problematic as well because they remove the hair from below the surface of the skin. "If that hair is curly, coily, or coarse, it can have trouble finding its way through the pore and instead curl under the skin," says Tiffany Clay, M.D., a dermatologist in Atlanta. The result: ingrown hairs, inflammation of the pore due to the piercing of the curled hair into the skin, and, ultimately, scarring and hyperpigmentation. The angry razor bumps from my dry-shave experiment eventually went away, and I've never tried it again—even when my own kids try to drag me to the pool with stubbly legs. I don't rush; either I take the time to shave the right way or I confidently flaunt my fuzz poolside. It's a lesson I hope my own

daughter doesn't ignore when she's old enough to get her own razor (pink or not). Here are some tips I've learned:

- Choose a single-blade razor, like **Oui the People The Single Sensitive Skin Razor** (\$75; ouithepeople.com), shown below. This lightly weighted razor adds pressure to help glide across the body and cut hair for a close—but not under-the-skin—shave, sans ingrown hairs or irritation.

- Always apply a moisturizing shaving cream, like **Elina Organics Lavender Shave Butter** (\$25; elinaorganics.com), shown below. "Dry shaving can traumatize the skin's surface, causing it to react with red bumps and a burning sensation," Dr. Clay explains.

- Once or twice a week, use a gentle exfoliator with glycolic or salicylic acid, such as **Skinfix Resurface+ Glycolic Renewing Body Scrub** (\$30; sephora.com) to clear clogged or blocked pores that may trap hairs underneath.

- In the bikini area, where ingrown hairs are most common, shave in the direction of growth to prevent cutting hair too close to the skin, says Heather C. Woolery-Lloyd, M.D., director of the Skin of Color Division for the University of Miami Department of Dermatology. You can also consider an electric razor. Immediately after shaving, pat the skin dry and smooth on a facial moisturizer, like **Cetaphil Moisturizing Lotion** (\$15; drugstores).

- Even after shaving, your underarms may appear darker because of rashes, chronic irritation, or shadowing from hair under the skin. A tone-correcting deodorant, such as **Secret Derma+ Even Tone 48 Hr. Invisible Gel Antiperspirant** (\$10, target.com), which contains vitamin C to brighten skin, may help a bit. "A condition called acanthosis nigricans can cause underarm skin to darken as well," Dr. Clay says. "But most commonly, this is simply a normal variation of our melanin, similar to color variations in our genital area, knees, and elbows."



Single-blade razors paired with a shave cream are best for sensitive skin.

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Should I Spring for Laser Hair Removal?

The price tag is hefty (the average for a full course of treatments is \$975, although that varies greatly depending on the area you're treating), but laser removal is quicker, far less painful, and safe for many more skin tones and hair colors than it used to be. Some buyers like to factor in the time and effort saved by dispensing with ongoing hair removal and the bonus of no longer having to deal with the likes of scars, discoloration, and ingrowns.

Typically, laser hair removal requires a series of six laser treatments with six weeks between each to remove most of the treated hair permanently. The latest devices make the

process comfortable with advanced features that gently suction the skin, cool it with compressed air, or use multiple wavelengths simultaneously at lower outputs to reduce pain and treatment time, says Christian Karavolas, founder of Romeo & Juliette Laser Hair Removal, in New York City. Treating an upper-lip area can take five minutes, while full legs can be done in 30 minutes. Although laser hair removal still won't work on white and blond hair (neither has enough pigment for the laser to target), the technology has come a long way in being able to treat women of color. "A laser called the Nd:YAG bypasses the pigment in your skin and instead targets just the pigment of your hair follicle," Dr. Clay says. "Because of that, it doesn't burn, scar, or cause pigmentation issues in dark skin."



Have Hair, Don't Care

We asked a few moms who decided to stop removing their body hair to share their insights.

"Recently, I've made a conscious habit to keep my armpit hair, because it's natural. It's my stand against beauty standards," says Chaneen Saliee, a mom of two and an influencer in London whose Instagram Reel on the subject went viral. "My daughter said, 'I want hair, too,' so I drew fake hair on her armpits. It's important to me that my children know that what grows on their body is normal and acceptable and that they don't have to change themselves for any reason."

"Pre-pandemic, I got Brazilian waxes every six weeks and had my eyebrows threaded monthly; being hairy felt like the bane of my existence," says Atena Hosseini Moore, a mom of two in Annandale, Virginia. "But then the pandemic happened. It's given me no other choice but to embrace the hair growth."

"I'm a middle-of-the-roader. I don't shave unless I feel like it," says Rebecca Scritchfield, a mom of two in Washington, D.C. "My hair is thin and light, so even when I post a brag pic of my pit hair, it's nothing special. I just don't care about the gaze of others."



EDITORS' PICK

Once you've landed on embracing body hair, remember that it benefits from a little hydration. Smooth one pump of the hempseed- and lavender-based **Noto Botanics Agender Oil** (\$44; notobotanics.com) anywhere you have hair to soften it.

