

Hair Where?!

How to Get Rid of the Fuzz You Don't Want

Hair today... gone tomorrow.
Turn the page for the tips.

It should be so simple. But if you've ever attempted a King Pigeon yoga pose in the tub to get that last bit of stubble on the back of your ankle or chomped down on a towel to endure a bikini wax, you know hair removal can get...tricky. We asked for your craziest shaving, waxing, and depilatory confessions and polled the pros for guidance on how to make things go more *smoothly* next time. ▶

BY GINA WAY

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DIY DISASTER

“It took me three hours to remove one strip of an at-home bikini wax kit. I would pull a little, cry, then pull more. I actually canceled my plans that night. Any tips for a better experience?” —C.M., Attleboro, MA

► **EXPERT ADVICE** “Pop a pain reliever an hour before,” suggests New York dermatologist Elizabeth Hale, M.D., and don’t wax right before or after your period, when skin tends to be more sensitive. Use gentler hard wax (you pull it off with your hand instead of cloth strips), and moisturize beforehand since it’ll hurt a lot more if your skin is dry, says Keisha Pittman, an aesthetics educator for Bliss spa. Spread a thick layer onto a 2-by-3-inch section of skin in the direction of hair growth. Once it’s semidry, press with your hand, then pull swiftly against the hair growth.

HAIRY DIGITS

“My fingers and toes look like something out of *The Hobbit*. I’m really embarrassed in summer when I wear sandals. Should I wax or shave?” —A.B., New York

► **EXPERT ADVICE** Not only is your Bilbo Baggins issue easy to remedy, it’s much more common than you think. Shaving isn’t the answer

here—you’ll have stubble in a day. Plus, it’s easy to nick yourself in an area with lots of little creases. Waxing is a better option since it removes hair from the root, and it’s simple to do at home. “Kits with strips are easiest to use on this area,” says Pittman. Just warm the double-sided strip for a few seconds between the palms of your hands, pull the strip apart, and press one firmly on the area. Pull it off against hair growth.

LIP DISSERVICE

“I had my upper lip waxed, and some of my skin ripped off! I had to walk around with a shiny Neosporin mustache for a week. How can I stop this from happening again?” —M.M., Roselle Park, NJ

► **EXPERT ADVICE** Waxing can take off the top layers of dead skin along with hair, so be mindful of what you’re putting on your face *before*. “Retinoids, benzoyl peroxide, acids, and face scrubs exfoliate the top layer of skin, making it vulnerable to wax burn,” says New York dermatologist Whitney Bowe, M.D. “Stop using these products a week before waxing.”

ARM (HAIR) WRESTLING

“I’m so self-conscious about my dark arm hair that I wear long sleeves, even in the summer. I’m afraid to go the waxing route and won’t shave (Hello? Stubble!). Should I lighten this hair?” —K.U., Wilmington, MA

► **EXPERT ADVICE** Bleaching can be very effective at camouflaging dark arm hair, and it’s totally painless. But it works best on fair to medium skin tones, since bleached blond hair against a dark complexion is even more noticeable. “The hydrogen peroxide in these kits could also irritate the skin if you’re touching up dark regrowth on such a large area every few weeks,” warns Bowe. Your next best bet is a depilatory cream, which can get rid of this hair completely for up to two weeks.

THAT’S THE PITS

“I have a five o’clock shadow under my arms, even right after shaving. Is there anything I can do to get rid of it?”

—E.S., New York

► **EXPERT ADVICE** The hair just underneath the surface of your skin creates this look. Sexy on Jon Hamm’s face, yes, but not so attractive under your arms. To get the very closest shave, start with a clean, sharp blade. “Replace yours every five to eight shaves,” advises Brittany Johnson, master barber at the Rittenhouse Spa & Club in Philadelphia. Then, shave strategically. “Hair grows in various patterns under your arms, so you need to go against the grain in every direction—up and down, right to left, and diagonally—in order to get the smoothest results,” she says. For a more permanent solution, consider laser hair removal. It’s pricey (average is \$300 per treatment), and you’ll need about five sessions, but you’ll get a nearly permanent reduction. At-home lasers are everywhere now, but they’re much less powerful than their in-office cousins, so it could take twice as many treatments to defuzz completely.

FEEL THE HEAT

“I used a depilatory cream ‘down there’ and ended up with a chemical burn. After a few days of icing, I was back to normal, but now I’m terrified of removing any hair in that region. What went wrong?” —L.B., Austin, TX

► **EXPERT ADVICE** Ouch! The chemicals in depilatories (usually calcium or potassium hydroxide) can be harsh on this delicate area. Laser hair removal is actually the safer way to get rid of hair down south, and it’s especially good if you’re prone to ingrowns since it destroys the follicle. “I tell my patients to shave the day before the treatment to provide just enough pigment for the laser to detect and target,” says Bowe.

BEARDED LADY

“I was driving car-pool with a bunch of first graders, and my 5-year-old son suddenly exclaimed, ‘Mommy has a beard!’ Mortifying. If I shave my peach fuzz, will it grow back thicker?” —B.J., New York

► **EXPERT ADVICE** “It’s a myth that shaving makes hair grow in thicker,” says Bowe, who recommends lathering up your face with a moisturizing shave gel, then gently drawing the blade downward on your face, in the direction of hair growth. “If you shave this way, hair grows back with tapered, soft ends that are less noticeable,” she adds. But no matter how you do it, you’ll still see

stubble within a day or two. You can buy a little more time with a depilatory cream, which dissolves hair on the surface of the skin and slightly underneath the pore. “Just do a patch test on a small area of skin first to make sure you’re not allergic to the chemicals in the formula,” Bowe recommends. A longer-lasting alternative is to have it waxed off. (Lasers don’t work as well on fine facial hair.) “Your aesthetician should use a hard, stripless wax on the face,” says Alexandra Del Gaudio, an aesthetician at the Stark Waxing Studio in Los Angeles. “It adheres just to hair, not skin, so you avoid that stinging, ripping Band-Aid effect.”

BROW, BEATEN

“I got an ingrown eyebrow hair that looked like a big zit. What gives?”

—J.W., Union City, NJ

► **EXPERT ADVICE** You may have been plucking with dull tweezers, says Manana, senior eyebrow specialist at Frédéric Fekkai Salon in New York. They don’t grip the hair as tightly, so it can break off close to the skin and grow back into the follicle. This also sometimes happens if you try plucking a hair that’s too short. “It needs to be long enough so that you can pull it out entirely by the root,” she says. Next time, tweeze after showering: “The steam softens hair, so it pulls out effortlessly.” ■



▼ **A three-hour bikini wax? Don’t let it happen to you. Read one woman’s hair-raising tale, above.**