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Pubic Hair Removal

Today, we'll start the blog with a question you may never have considered – have you ever removed some or all of your pubic hair?

We know it's not the kind of question you'd ask at dinner parties or the gym. But pubic hair removal has become more common, especially over the last ten years or so in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia.

The practice is not new. Art and artifacts from ancient Egypt, classical Greece, and the Italian Renaissance depict women without pubic hair.

But why do people do it in modern times? How do they go about it? Let's look at some of these questions.

How many people remove their pubic hair? And why?

Scientists aren't completely sure how many people remove their pubic hair. However, a recent survey of college students at two United States universities revealed that 95% of the 1,110 subjects (671 men and 439 women) had removed pubic hair at least once in the previous four weeks.

Past research found several reasons for removing pubic hair. Both men and women considered the practice a matter of hygiene. They just felt cleaner after removing, or trimming, their pubic hair. Some reported feeling more sexually attractive with less or no hair. And some feel that doing so is expected by society.

People might remove their pubic hair because of partner preferences, too. For example, if one partner enjoys oral sex, the other may be more comfortable giving it if some or all pubic hair is removed. In the study of college students, 60% of the men said they preferred having a partner who was hair-free. (Half of the women in that study were hair-free compared to 19% of the men.)

How do people remove their pubic hair?

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Shaving is one of the most common methods, reported by 82% of the female and 49% of the male college students. Usually, this involves trimming the hair, then using shaving cream and a razor every few days.

Depilatories are another option. This method uses chemicals to remove the hair.

Some people go to a salon to have their pubic hair *waxed*. Warm wax is placed on the hair and, once it hardens, is removed, taking pubic hair with it by the root. Waxing may not be for the faint of heart – many people find it painful.

Laser hair removal is offered by some medical professionals, such as dermatologists. In this procedure, a technician points a laser beam at the unwanted hair. Heat from the laser destroys the root. It may take a few sessions to remove all of the hair.

Electrolysis usually has the longest-lasting effects, but also requires the most sessions. A needle-shaped electrode is used to remove each hair root with an electric current.

Does removing pubic hair have any health benefits?

Pubic hair removal has no direct health benefits. It is more about personal preference. However, if a person feels more sexually attractive or relaxed with less or no pubic hair, or feels more sexually satisfied after removing it, that could be considered a benefit.

Is it dangerous to remove pubic hair? Are there any risks?

There can be risks. For example, some people cut themselves shaving. These cuts can be hard to see. But they increase the risk for infections. A person with cuts may be at higher risk for sexually-transmitted infections or strep and staph infections. Even the tiniest cut can allow an infection to enter the body. Bacteria on unsanitary tools can also transmit infections.

Burns – from wax, chemicals, or razors – may occur, along with allergies to the products used.

Other problems associated with pubic hair removal include blisters and pimples.

In the study of college students, genital itching was the common side effect. Eighty-percent of the pubic hair removers experienced itching at least once.

Should I remove my pubic hair?

Only if you want to. Removing pubic hair is a personal choice. You can be sexually healthy with or without it.

However, if you do decide to remove pubic hair, be sure to do so safely. Use razors and products that are designed for this purpose. Make sure they are sanitary. Check the credentials of any technician you visit. And if you have a problem with side effects, cuts, or infections, see your doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor can answer any questions you have about pubic hair removal as well.

Resources

International Society for Sexual Medicine

“Is pubic hair removal related to sexual function or behaviors?”

<http://www.issm.info/education-for-all/sexual-health-qa/is-pubic-hair-removal-related-to-sexual-function-or-behaviors1/>

“Is removing pubic hair now the norm among women?”

<http://www.issm.info/education-for-all/sexual-health-qa/is-removing-pubic-hair-now-the-norm-among-women1/>

“What are some common pubic hair removal methods for women?”

<http://www.issm.info/education-for-all/sexual-health-qa/what-are-some-common-pubic-hair-removal-methods-for-women/>

“What are the benefits of removing women’s pubic hair?”

<http://www.issm.info/education-for-all/sexual-health-qa/what-are-the-benefits-of-removing-womens-pubic-hair/>

“What are the health risks of removing women’s pubic hair?”

<http://www.issm.info/education-for-all/sexual-health-qa/what-are-the-health-risks-of-removing-womens-pubic-hair/>

“Why might a woman remove her pubic hair?”

<http://www.issm.info/education-for-all/sexual-health-qa/why-might-a-woman-remove-her-pubic-hair1/>

The Journal of Sexual Medicine

Butler, Scott M., PhD, MPH, et al.

“Pubic Hair Preferences, Reasons for Removal, and Associated Genital Symptoms:
Comparisons Between Men and Women”

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<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jsm.12763/full>