

THE BEAUTY EXPERT

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## GET A *SEXY* BODY

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## Summer Skin Starts Now

OUR EDITORS' VERY BEST TIPS

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*Help It Grow, Make It Shine*

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Photographed by  
Patrick Demarchelier

# Smooth Sailing

Bikini season is coming—and with it, bikini-waxing season. We reveal the best ways to get bare, the most flattering waxing shapes for your body, and how to stay hairless virtually forever. **By Rory Evans**

**G**et this: Women remove hair from about 676 square inches of their body, a surface area that's roughly 18 times larger than what the average man shaves, according to research from Gillette. Given this relatively vast swath of underarm, leg, and bikini area (potentially gross visual aid: slightly bigger than the top of a large pizza box), how do women prefer to remove the hair? Fifty-eight percent shave, 21 percent wax, and 18 percent use depilatory products, a survey for American Laser Centers found. It

also showed that women spend the equivalent of 69 round-the-clock days removing hair each year—imagine devoting the equivalent of every single second of June and July in the service of attacking strands and stubble (instead of it merely feeling that way).

At least some folks are sympathetic. Dermatologists, aestheticians, and the makers of personal-care products realize that all this hair removal is a real pain in the [insert body part of choice here] and are constantly innovating and improving various fuzz-busting techniques. These are the best ways to get smooth this summer.

## Six Steps to a Better Shave

### 1 **Shave after washing.**

Showering or bathing in warm water for at least two or three minutes prior to shaving "will prevent dirt and dead skin from jamming up a razor or causing ingrowns," says Claire Girdler, a research scientist at Gillette.

### 2 **Dry off your razor.**

"I knew a girl who shaved her bikini area with a razor she always left in the shower, and she ended up with a staph infection," says Jodi Shays, owner of Queen Bee Salon and Spa in Los Angeles. Granted, that's an extreme example, but wiping your razor clean and storing it someplace dry can ward off bacteria.

### 3 **Use a fresh, sharp blade (or five).**

If it's a disposable razor, chuck it after two or three uses. If it has a replaceable blade, switch to a new one before it gets dull. Most American women replace

after about a dozen uses, according to Gillette research, but you should change it at the first sign of dullness or discomfort, says Girdler. "For most women, this is after about 10 to 12 shaves."

**4 Consider every angle.** This may alter the technique you've been using since you first took razor to downy shin, but you should shave in the direction of growth to minimize irritation, nicks, and ingrowns. That means downward strokes on legs and the bikini area, and "since underarm hair can grow in all directions, shave up, down, and across," says Girdler.

### 5 **Apply lots of shaving cream.**

If you have to go over an area twice, Girdler recommends reapplying gel or cream—enough to coat your entire leg and keep skin from peeking through. Ni'Kita Wilson,

a cosmetic chemist in New York City, points out that body wash, shampoo, or conditioner can lubricate skin, too.

### 6 **Watch your footing.**

A slippery, foggy shower is not the place to test your balance. "You need to ensure you're sitting or standing comfortably while shaving," says Girdler, who recommends keeping both feet planted firmly. A nick isn't the worst thing that could happen, either: U.S. emergency rooms saw more than 1,000 injuries to genitals caused by razors, scissors, and clippers each year over an eight-year span, according to a 2012 study published in the *Journal of Urology*. (In fact, the researchers at the University of California, San Francisco found that those injuries increased fivefold over the past eight years.)

## How to Give Yourself A Bikini Wax

You don't have to be double-jointed to pull off a respectable bikini wax. But you should know some essential rules, plus where to draw the lines.

### No Brazilians.

"Do not attempt anything tricky," says Liliyah Vaysburg, a waxer at Stark in New York City. "Really just stick to cleaning up the hair that would be visible outside a bathing suit."

### Use prewaxed strips.

You hardly ever cook—and all of a sudden you want to whip up a batch of melted wax? Since it's far too easy to burn yourself with molten goop, you're better off getting a kit that comes with sticky strips (we like Veet Ready-to-Use).

### Stand up.

To prevent wax from yanking painfully on skin, keep skin taut by standing up when you wax the outer bikini area and upper thighs. For the inner thighs, sit down on a hard surface and extend one leg outward.

### Don't rush.

Give yourself plenty of time to do the job—"at least an hour," Shays says. Focus on small areas, "and only use narrow strips. They shouldn't be any wider than an inch and a half."

**Women are more likely to be interested in sex on the days they remove their pubic hair, according to a 2012 study of more than 2,400 women in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*.**

## Maximize Your Wax

Closing your eyes and wishing it were over may be the easiest way to endure a bikini wax, but it's not the most efficient. There are steps you should take before, during, and even after your appointment to ensure the best (and least painful) results.

### One month before.

"I tell my clients they have to wait four to six weeks in between waxes," Vaysburg says, which admittedly can be kind of a hairy prospect. Tempting as it is to take a razor to stubble, wax won't adhere to hair that's shorter than a quarter of an inch.

### The day you book.

"Double dipping," the practice of using the same stick to apply wax on more than one area, can lead to infections. "I had a client who probably got warts from bad waxing practices," says New York City dermatologist Francesca Fusco. When you schedule your appointment, tell the spa that it's important to you that it not double dip. And if you see it happening, leave.

### The night before.

Since dead skin can easily clog hair follicles and cause ingrowns, be sure to exfoliate the night before a wax, says Fusco. She recommends using a scrub with salicylic acid or retinol, both of which will clean the surface of the skin and excavate pores and follicles. If you already have such

a product for your face, it's fine to use around your bikini area.

### One hour before.

Take Advil or Tylenol. But speaking of pills, if you're on Accutane, don't wax at all: "The wax can rip your skin right off," Fusco says. While a numbing cream like Lanacane (or other topical anesthetics) can somewhat numb the pain, it's not recommended—you might not be able to tell if the wax is so hot it's burning.

### During your wax.

Hair is being yanked out at the root from one of your body's most sensitive areas. Of course it's going to hurt. Deep breathing and exhaling during the most painful parts—as you do in weight training or childbirth—can certainly help.

### Right after, and for the next several days.

Temper any tenderness and irritation with a salve such as Aquaphor or pure aloe vera gel. To prevent ingrowns, continue to treat the area with a salicylic acid cleanser.

## Does My Bikini Wax Make Me Look Fat?

You know how the size of fascinators, those tiny hats held on by a comb or a headband, has a way of making women appear a tad absurd? (We're looking at you, Princesses Eugenie and Beatrice.) The same can be said of pubic hair. "You don't want just a thumbprint of hair down there," says Shays. In fact, there's what she calls "a feng shui" to getting a shape that flatters your body.

### If you're thin with narrow hips:

"These are the girls who can get away with a fine landing strip," Shays says. For many women, though, "the landing strip looks ridiculous," says aesthetician Lidia Tivichi, owner of Maris Dusan Spa (and unapologetic straight shooter). "You see all the fat around the vagina." (Told you.)

### If you have a belly:

"A slightly larger bush is more flattering," Tivichi says. "Keep it in a groomed triangle, which will make your stomach look smaller." Also, if you have a pooch, be sure to trim from the top, so that skin doesn't sag over the hairline.

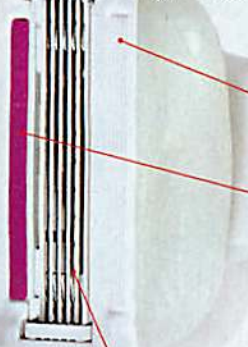
**If you have hips and a booty:** Go for the triangle, but adjust the size to your body, Shays says: "The larger you are, the wider the top line should be."

**If you weigh 7 pounds 13 ounces:** Newborns and children can be completely hairless. The bald look, so popular about a decade ago, has fallen out of favor, anecdotal evidence from aestheticians suggests.

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT RAZOR

*In 1971, womankind was given the Flicker, the first disposable lady razor that just happened to be a doppelgänger for a birth control pill compact. But since then, our razors have come a long way, baby. Researchers at Gillette reveal what makes a truly cutting-edge design.*

Gillette Venus & Olay razor



Multiple spring-mounted blades capture virtually every hair on the first pass and adjust to the contours of the body, even on tricky areas like the ankle.

Glide is important for women (because of the long strokes they use while shaving), so their razors should offer some lubrication to prevent nicks and cuts. "A worn-down lubrication strip also indicates when it's time to get a new razor," says Girdler, who stresses it's still important to use shaving cream, too.

An oval-shaped cartridge, as opposed to a rectangular one, fits better into hard-to-reach areas.

A curved handle with ridges and a rubber grip gives greater control in a slippery bath or shower.

### Tip

Your blades are getting dull when you feel you have to press harder or take more strokes in order to get a close shave.

# The Price of Hairlessness

Where are the hairs growing, how many are there, and what color are they? These are the questions that will help determine what kind of permanent hair removal you need—electrolysis (best for small areas) or laser (most effective on dark hair). Another consideration? Price. Both methods will cost you.

## UPPER LIP

**Method:** Laser.  
**Cost:** \$750 for six sessions.  
*Facial hair grows faster than body hair, so dermatologists recommend waiting four to six weeks between treatments.*

## UNDERARMS

**Method:** Laser.  
**Cost:** \$1,000 for six sessions.  
*Lasers work best on coarse, dark strands.*

## NIPPLES

**Method:** Electrolysis.  
**Cost:** \$40.  
*"Women don't want to talk about this, but it's common. And if you pluck the hairs, nipples can get very inflamed," says Heidi Waldorf, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City.*

## LEGS

**Method:** Laser.  
**Cost:** \$2,500 for six sessions (lower legs).  
*Lasers typically entail a topical anesthetic; dermatologists do upper legs in one session and lower legs in another, Waldorf says.*

## SIDEBURNS

**Method:** Laser.  
**Cost:** \$750 for six sessions.  
*These fuzzy strips are especially common for women with polycystic ovarian syndrome or a mild insulin resistance. While drugs can address the problem, Fusco says laser treatments can get rid of the hair.*

## UNIBROW

**Method:** Electrolysis.  
**Cost:** \$40 (usually takes one session).  
*Since it's close to the eyes, dermatologists advise against lasers here.*

## CHIN

**Method:** Laser or electrolysis.  
**Cost:** \$750 for six laser sessions; \$40 to \$100 for electrolysis.  
*Lasers can be really effective—as long as the hairs are dark. For blonde, white, or gray hairs, you need electrolysis, says Waldorf.*

## FOREARMS

**Method:** Laser.  
**Cost:** \$1,250 for six sessions.  
*You generally need more than six treatments, but this varies depending on how much arm hair you have.*

## BIKINI AREA

**Method:** Laser.  
**Cost:** \$1,000 for six sessions.  
*Think twice about permanent Brazilians. "What's desirable now might not be so a decade from now," says New York City dermatologist Melanie Grossman.*

## Tip

*Between laser appointments, you can shave or use a depilatory cream, but no waxing or tweezing—you don't want to disturb hair at the root.*

# There's a Wax for That

*It's hard to know which type of wax goes on which body part. The formula for your bikini area is hot and sticky, while the one for your legs is...hot and sticky. Here, we clear up the confusion.*

## Sugar wax

**WHERE IT GOES:** This gooey, slow-cooked mixture of sugar, lemon, and water sticks to fine hairs anywhere on the body. "It's kind of the dinosaur of hair removal," Shays says. (Therefore, it's not found at most salons.)

**WHAT IT DOES:** Fans of the concoction (which gets removed with cloth strips) say it peels easily from skin.

**THE PERK:** Since it dissolves in water, it can be rinsed off instead of pulled.

## Soft wax (a.k.a. strip wax)

**WHERE IT GOES:** Large surfaces, like the legs and arms; it's typically better suited to fine hairs.

**WHAT IT DOES:** Sticks to skin as well as hair, and stays soft as it cools. It requires strips of cloth for removal.

**THE PERK:** It uproots fine hairs instead of breaking them in half—the primary cause of speedy regrowth.

## Hard wax (a.k.a. stripless wax)

**WHERE IT GOES:** On small, sensitive areas, like the bikini and underarms. It's best for coarse hairs.

**WHAT IT DOES:** Hardens around the hair and clings to it—but not to the underlying skin (provided it's not too hot or spread too thick).

**THE PERK:** "It's more gentle on skin than other formulas," Vaysburg says. What's more, fabric isn't required to yank it up.