

# GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

## 8 Gentle and Effective Ways to Remove Facial Hair That upper lip peach fuzz has officially overstayed its welcome.

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Of all the beauty treatments out there, removing your facial hair (or any hair, for that matter) is one of the least pleasant activities — but it doesn't have to be difficult as long as you choose the right method for your preferences, hair type, and needs. If you want to get rid of that fuzz along your upper lip, hairs on your chin, or sprouts between your brows, here's what you need to know about each possible method.

### **Plucking: Clean Your Tweezers First**

Chances are, plucking is the route with which you're most familiar. After all, tweezers are commonplace in most households so they're the easiest to reach for when you see some strays.

"Tweezing is better for smaller, localized areas like your brows and chin since it's much more labor intensive," advises Lavanya Krishnan, M.D., a dermatologist based in San Francisco. Just make sure you're diligent about cleaning them, she adds. "I recommend cleansing your tweezers once per day with warm soap and water, then storing them in a dry place."

If you're not sure how to properly shape your brows, take a look at our easy eyebrow guide.

### **Waxing: Read Reviews Before You Book**

Another very common method is waxing. Using either soft wax, which is pulled off with cloth strips, or hard wax that simply hardens and is pulled off on its own, a practitioner can remove hairs from your upper lip, cheeks, brows and chin with ease. But this popular practice isn't for everyone.

"Waxing can cause irritation because the skin can be sensitive to the products being applied to the surface," warns [Michelle Yagoda](#), M.D., a cosmetic surgeon based in New York. "An inexact technique may result in incomplete extraction of the hair follicle and breakage of the hair shaft, so the skin surrounding the hair shaft can then become inflamed." If the retained hair follicle becomes entrapped, it can lead to ingrown hairs. Always read reviews online prior to visiting a new waxing boutique. Your skin will thank you.

## **Shaving: Do It After Your Shower**

While shaving may be less commonly used on the face than the aforementioned options, it's the way many women choose to remove their facial hair. But wait — what about that old wives' tale about hair coming back thicker if you shave?

"It's just a myth that your hair will grow coarser and more densely after shaving," explains Dr. Krishnan. "The follicle gets cut in half so it feels pricklier, but it's not any thicker."

If you feel most comfortable with a razor, just be sure to take precautions so you can get the smoothest, least irritated finish.

"Shave either in the shower or just afterward to allow the skin to soften," advises Anthony Sosnick, shaving expert and founder of Shaveworks. This is also helpful if you have thick or coarse hair, as the heat of the steam also softens the strands. Then apply a pre-shave oil, which is frequently used by men, but Sosnick notes that it can help women avoid razor burn too. As for the razor itself, Sosnick recommends picking one with two blades, as "they tend to be more targeted for those sensitive areas — and sometimes, fewer blades does the job without the potential for redness and razor burn."

One big tip from dermatologist Michael Swann, M.D.: Don't make passes over the same area several times with your razor. Otherwise, you could irritate your skin — not a great look to have front and center on your face. Once you're done shaving, apply a hydrating moisturizer to sooth your skin.

## **Threading: Stick With an Expert**

Threading is a very common practice in Middle Eastern and Asian countries that involves using a thin, doubled cotton thread pulled super-taut to roll over spots where you wish to remove hairs, thus pulling them out. While it isn't quite as labor intensive as plucking hairs one at a time, it works best on smaller areas such as the eyebrows, upper lip and cheeks. And unlike using tweezers, threading is much trickier to try if you've never been trained in it, so head to a salon with a professional who specializes in it for the best results.

## **Depilatory Creams: Start With a Patch Test**

Gone are the days when depilatory creams were pungently scented — there are lots of new ones that are gentle and fragrance-free. These creams are applied to the area with unwanted hair, then wiped away along with the hairs themselves.

"Depilatory creams use chemicals such as calcium thioglycolate or potassium thioglycolate, which break disulfide bonds in keratin, thereby weakening the hair," explains Christine Choi Kim, M.D., a dermatologist based in Santa Monica, California. If you go this route, always do a patch test first to check for any allergies.

### **Topical Prescriptions: Talk to Your Derm**

In addition to the aforementioned over-the-counter or in-salon methods, you can also talk to your dermatologist about trying a topical prescription.

"There are prescription meds like Vaniqa, which is a topical once-a-day treatment used to reduce hair growth," explains Dr. Krishnan. Here's the catch: while it's "very effective," Dr. Krishnan notes that once you stop, the effect wears off and your hair will grow back.

### **Laser Hair Removal: Consider the Upkeep**

If you want something much more permanent, you can try laser hair removal, also known as intense pulse light therapy.

"Lasers shoot a certain wavelength of light that's specifically absorbed by the hair follicle itself," says Dr. Krishnan. When that light is absorbed, it's converted into heat which kills the hair follicle. The advantage this route has over electrolysis is treating a larger portion at a time, while electrolysis (elaborated on below) is individually ablating one follicle at a time — think waxing versus plucking. The downsides: This isn't an ideal route for those with light or fine hairs, and the cost is high, with sessions ranging from \$50 to \$300. Plus, you may need several sessions to fully destroy the follicles.

### **Electrolysis: Ideal for Permanent Hair Removal**

Another permanent option: electrolysis, which uses concentrated heat to destroy each follicle one at a time to prohibit hairs from growing. This is an ideal method for folks who want permanent hair removal, but can't do laser removal because their hairs are light or fuzzy.

If you're searching for ways to get rid of hair on your legs, arms, bikini line and underarms, check out our full-body hair removal guide for more info.