



# Risky Business

has the variant dealt a blow to your salon services?

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August 17

“Ask Val” answers your urgent questions, Vol. 12

Yes, you in the oversized dark glasses, trimming your brows with a— is that a hedge cutter?

**Q:** I’m desperate to get my eyebrows shaped and tinted. But the exploding Delta variant has me wondering what doctor’s office or salon treatment is safe. Should I keep my appointments?

**A:** I might start calling this newsletter *Adventures in Body Hair*, so many of your questions and concerns relate to either the overabundance or deficiency of fur. And why shouldn’t they? Hair conveys critical information about our age, sex, health, and perceived attractiveness. The condition and grooming of eyebrows, for example...well, I’ll get to that. (After lots of equivocating, I’ve been ‘bladed and I’ll report on the final results in a couple of weeks.)

Anyway, I asked facial plastic surgeon [Michelle Yagoda](#) for clear safety guidelines to follow in these variant times: “First, it’s important to point out that the risk of Covid is related to the quantity of viral load as well as the proximity and duration of exposure to the virus. Procedures that require close contact between people for a prolonged period of time with one person unmasked increase risk.

“But you also need to remember that risk is mitigated to some degree when both people are vaccinated, both people are asymptomatic, and there is good ventilation and filtration in the room. So: Knowledge is power! Which means you want to find out what Covid protocols are followed in the office you’re considering for a visit.”

*Ok, I thought. Easy enough. Ask questions, make an informed choice.* But then the good doctor added:

“Still—and this is equally relevant—although Covid symptoms are predicted to be ‘decreased’ after vaccination, they can be significant. One of my colleagues recently became ill with the Delta variant and experienced 60 hours of a 103.5° fever. He pointed out that although his case was medically categorized as ‘mild’ (he obviously didn’t die and didn’t require hospitalization), his experience and symptoms were hardly ‘mild.’”

Back to square one.

“So, because both our understanding and the science about the variant are evolving,” Yagoda said, “there is no one absolute or definitive answer to this question.

My suggestion: When choosing a procedure, whether it is purely cosmetic or medically necessary, you have to consider your personal risk tolerance. And remember that every day we take risks (crossing the street, riding the subway, riding a bike, flying on a plane) without inordinate fear of the consequences.”

This reminds me of how random and varied our personal risk tolerance is. I know people who will happily enjoy a meal indoors, but won't take public transportation even in a mask. Or they'll take public transit *and* keep wearing their mask outside. One thing I feel sure about: We low-risk-tolerance people will be masking for a long time.

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A moment about last week's post, which garnered lots of positive feedback (meaning you related to the impulse of being kinder to ourselves and to other women). There was one response I found surprising. A reader wrote: *I admire anyone who can tell that catty bitch in the mirror to f\*ck off. I just don't know any woman, of any generation, who can. Now, men, on the extremely other hand...*

This got me thinking (again) about perfection—and how striving for it can be self-defeating. *A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step*, said spiritual marathoner and father of Taoism, Lao Tzu. So...sure, the catty b\*tch you told to f\*ck off today may be back tomorrow; in fact, she probably will be. But you can let

her know whenever she appears that she's *never* welcome on your path.

And on the note of girls supporting girls, sisterly love, and nerds against the (mean girl) world, the hilarious and moving *Pen15* (Hulu) gets it absolutely right. Two thirty-something actresses miraculously play 13-year-old BFFs—and if you can stand reliving some of your 7th-grade traumas, I think you'll find their escapades (better to call them messcapades) a tonic for uncomfortable memories.