Brazilian waxing [1]

Dear Alice,

I am in love with the method of Brazilian bikini waxing and have been doing it for a couple of months now. I have heard that it may be unsafe or unhealthy to have the entire pubic area waxed, and it could lead to infection. Is this a myth or is there some reality to this warning?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Glad you're so happy with your new look! While the Brazilian bikini waxing method is generally considered safe, there have been few cases of people who have experienced complications. Because of the potential for health risks, there may be some folks who want to consider other methods of hair removal and management. But, for folks who are in good health, there are a few tips to consider to keep you safe and happy with your waxing experience.

It's great that you've had a good experience with this hair removal method thus far and are looking ahead. However, it's good to be aware of the complications that have been reported by others. They range in severity and have included:

- Ingrown hairs
- Burns from hot wax
- Vulvar and vaginal irritation and infection
- Folliculitis [2]
- Transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as molluscum contagiosum [3] and herpes [4] (from the process, not the lack of hair)

Because of these potential complications, this hair removal method may not be for everyone. Folks with weakened immune systems (e.g., those who have diabetes or HIV, skin conditions like psoriasis, have recently had an organ transplant, or are taking immunosuppressants) may want to reconsider going bare via this method. That being said, for those who are in good health, the best way to avoid these unpleasant consequences is to ensure that your waxing is performed in a safe and clean manner. Here are some tips to protect your goodies the next time you're at the salon:

- Locate a reputable professional in a sanitary environment in which to get your waxing done. Some states have regulations for salon providers that do Brazilian waxing to ensure cleanliness and safety. Check out Go Ask Alice! Q&A Beauty salon health risks? [5]
for more information on licensed professionals and salon regulations.

- Request that the person performing the waxing practice proper hygiene, such as wearing gloves and properly cleaning the waxing area and tools used beforehand.
- Confirm with the person performing the waxing that the wax hasn't been used before with other clients and that they will use a new applicator each time. This will prevent any bacteria or viruses from being transmitted from person to person.
- Consider natural waxing products, such as sugar waxes. Natural products may help to prevent allergic reactions.
- Irritation resulting from the hair removal can be alleviated with a cool bath, aloe gel, or ice (but avoid placing ice directly on irritated skin). If none of these strategies soothe your pain, it may be a good idea to seek medical care, especially if skin is damaged, broken, or looks infected.
- Keep the freshly waxed area clean and monitor for possible signs of infection post-wax.

You can also speak with your health care providers about pubic hair removal practices and their risks. The more you know, the less you have to worry about continuing to sport your hair-free 'do!

Lastly, it's worth mentioning that many people have their preferences regarding pubic hair. Some like the natural and full look, while others like their pubic area to be waxed and smooth. Although the purpose behind pubic hair isn't quite established just yet (the most common theory relates to pheromones, which are bodily scents that can be sexually stimulating to others), preventing infection is not one of its functions. As a result, a lack of hair in this area will not make someone more susceptible to infection so feel free to wax on, wax off if you so choose!

Alice!

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