Dear Alice,

What exactly does a depilatory cream or spray do? How does it work? Does hair grow back thicker and faster than before, like with shaving? For that matter, if you trim hair with a pair of scissors, does that also make it grow back thicker and faster? How about plucking with tweezers?

?Hairy and Curious

Answer

Dear Hairy and Curious,

Separating fact from fiction about hair growth (and re-growth) can be tricky. Your question provides a great opportunity to get to the root of some of the most common hair removal concerns. Let's review the pros and cons of these methods to help inform what might meet your hair removal needs.

**Depilatories** contain ingredients that disintegrate the hair, which can then be wiped or scrubbed away from the follicle after a few minutes of exposure. Hair re-growth begins in about two to five days. You may see various types of depilatory products on the market - creams, gels, powders, and other types - yet all versions work in the same way.

- What some people may like about depilatories: Painless hair removal that is relatively quick and can be done at home for a relatively inexpensive price.
- What some people may not like: Some find that depilatory products have a strong smell or odor. Dark haired users may see a bit of a shadow left on the skin after use due to subsurface hair. Depilatory products may also cause skin irritation. Many manufacturers recommend testing a small amount on a patch of skin before using liberally to test for any potential reactions.

**Tweezing** plucks hair from the root using tweezers. Hair will often begin to re-grow in about one week.

- What some people may like about tweezing: This hair-removal technique may be preferred for relatively small areas such as the eyebrow, upper lip, or random stray hairs.
- What some people may not like: It can be time consuming for large patches of skin and also painful, depending on your pain sensitivity. Some people may also experience ingrown hairs or scarring post tweezing.
**Shaving** is a common method of hair removal using a razor and shaving cream. Contrary to popular belief, shaving has not been scientifically shown to cause hair to regrow faster or thicker. Because the hair is cut at a blunt angle when shaving, hair that grows back after shaving may feel coarser. Some hair re-growth may also have the illusion of looking darker or thicker simply because the new hair contrasts with recently shaved, hair-free skin.

- **What some people may like about shaving:** Shaving is an effective hair removal option for large areas like legs, arms, and areas on the face. Supplies for shaving can also be found in most drug stores and supermarkets, and range in price.
- **What some people may not like:** Some people may experience razor burn or ingrown hairs after shaving. Shaving hair when it is wet, using a moisturizing shaving cream, changing your razor blade frequently (to avoid using a dull blade), and shaving in the direction of growth can lessen irritation and razor burn.

**Trimming** or cutting your hair with scissors does not affect hair growth or thickness. As your hair grows, it's exposed to sun, blow-drying, curling, and other environmental and styling elements. The resulting wear and tear can cause split ends, which can make the hair appear shorter and thinner.

- **What some people may like about trimming/haircuts:** A haircut, even if not actually increasing hair growth or thickness, can certainly make your hair feel and look healthier? even if it?s just a little trim!
- **What some people may not like:** Depending on where you go for a haircut/trim, salon and barber shops can vary widely in price. If you're on a budget, you may want to look into local beauty schools that have discounted cuts by students in-training.

Each person's skin and hair follicle sensitivity can be different. Hair grooming techniques that work for a friend, may not work as effectively for you. So, if you're trying to decide between options, you may want to try a few out and evaluate your own results for your grooming goals.

Hope this helps!

Alice!

Category:
- General Health
- Hair

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