

A simple guide to facial hair and what you can do

Pesky hairs that suddenly appear out of nowhere? Definitely not what we want to see in the mirror, but there are ways to make it all go away

It is a sad irony that as we age we naturally tend to get hairier in the places we don't want, like our chin and top lip, while our hair thins out in the areas we want it to be lustrous and thick – like our scalp and our eyebrows. Fortunately though there are plenty of ways you can manage the growth of unwanted facial hair, without resorting to tweezers. But first, let's look at the four key changes that happen to the hair on our face.

1. Moustache mouth

"This is often due to a normal change in hormones as we enter our 30s," says Melbourne dermatologist Dr Adam Sheridan, a spokesperson for the Australasian College Of Dermatologists. A common dermatological issue that often masquerades as a moustache is melasma; hormone and UV damage-driven deep dermal pigmentation of the skin.

2. Wispy chin hairs

We're born with the same hair follicles as men and after puberty, while men grow beards, women's production of oestrogen causes shrinkage of those hair follicles, explains dermatologist Dr Anita Patel. At menopause we produce less oestrogen so these hairs can grow thick and dark. In some women this hair also appears in areas that are traditionally 'male', such as the chest and around the nipples.

3. Downy peach fuzz cheeks

Not everyone experiences an overgrowth of normal downy peach fuzz. "This is largely due to the interplay of genetics and hormonal changes," explains Sheridan. "Everyone has hair distributed over most of their body, including the face and ears. Whether this is of sufficient concern to the individual is a subjective matter."

4. Thinning eyebrows

"Eyebrow hairs do thin out as you age, just as hair on the scalp does," says Patel. So it's not just over-plucking that causes thinner eyebrows. "It's not hormonal, it has more to do with ageing," she explains. Just how much they thin out is also determined by your genes. ▶



FACE FUZZ FIXES

Scientific advances now offer a range of different hair removal techniques. What's important to know is any treatment that promises permanent hair removal takes 6-10 treatments as hair follicles have dormant periods and grow at different rates.

In the salon

LASER HAIR REMOVAL: Laser treatments work by directing concentrated light into the hair follicle, which in turn inhibits the hair's ability to grow. "Much like lightning targets a lightning rod, laser seeks out darkly pigmented hairs," Sheridan explains. Laser is less effective on pale hair, he says, counselling also against using it on olive skin. "Olive skin is itself pigmented, so will distract the IPL or laser energy from the desired target (the dark hair shaft); potentially resulting in heating and consequent damage of the epidermal skin cells, rather than the hair follicle. This is why a good laser hair removal therapist will always instruct you to avoid excessive sun exposure and tanning when undergoing laser hair removal. A tan, like naturally dark skin, will distract and misdirect IPL and laser energy."

Cost: \$13-\$49 per treatment, depending on area (6-10 treatments required)

Time: 20-45 minutes

How long does it last: Permanent after course of treatment

Pain factor: Moderate (some describe the sensation as like a rubber band snapping against the skin)

More information: laserclinics.com.au

ALKALINE WASH: This treatment uses a thick alkaline paste to dissolve the hair shaft and weaken the papilla, from which the hair grows. At the end of each treatment the pH of the skin is restored. Repeated treatments will reduce hair regrowth. Alkaline hair removal is perfect for white downy (vellus) hair that cannot be lasered or easily waxed. The treatment is not like a regular hair removal cream.

Cost: \$95 per treatment (6-8 treatments required)

Time: 35-40 minutes

How long does it last: Permanent after required course of treatments

Pain factor: First timers may feel a mild burning sensation

More information: dannemking.com.au

THREADING: Threading is an ancient, chemical-free method of hair removal. An antibacterial thread is twisted and rolled across

the skin to lift and remove unwanted hair straight from the hair follicle. As the hair is removed entirely it leaves the skin smooth and can last 4-6 weeks. Threading is ideal for shaping the perfect eyebrows.

Cost: \$13-27 per treatment, depending on area

Time: 30-45 minutes

How long does it last: Temporary but, like waxing, repeated treatments can lead the follicle to stop growing hair

Pain factor: Moderate to strong

More information: getthreadednow.com

At home

NAIR SENSITIVE PRECISION WAX WAND: This wax wand is formulated so you can target areas of fine, unwanted hair. The wand can be used without heating. Just apply a small strip against the wax to grip and remove fine, short hair.

Cost: \$13.50

How long does it last: Temporary

Pain factor: Same as waxing

More information: nair.com.au

ANDREA GENTLE HAIR REMOVER FOR THE

FACE: This crème hair remover is ideal for the upper lip, across and under the chin and along the hair line. The pack also contains a cream to help calm and moisturise skin.

Cost: \$18.95

How long does it last: Temporary

Pain factor: None

More information: beautyhq.com.au

SILK'N INFINITY G: Using pulsed light, this machine removes hairs permanently by destroying the hair follicle. It can be used on most skin and hair colours. The Bluetooth inside connects to a free Silk'n Hair Removal app that can guide you step by step through the entire hair removal regimen.

Cost: \$649

How long does it last: Permanent with repeated applications

Pain factor: Moderate tingling or heat

More information: silkn.com.au

TWEEZERMAN SMOOTH FINISH FACIAL HAIR

REMOVER: Basically a specially designed set of tweezers for the areas of your face other than the brows, it pulls the hair out from the root and is great to use between salon appointments or just for a quick tidy up.

Cost: \$49.95

How long does it last: Like waxing, over time this will weaken and thin out hair

Pain factor: High

More information: datelinecity.com **P**

Did you know?

Is it true that plucking will make hair grow thicker?

"The short cut (no pun intended) to realising that this is false is to recognise that of all the balding men who have shaved their heads to conceal the fact, none have miraculously regrown their hair," says Dr Sheridan. Hair may appear thicker due to the fact that plucking and shaving cut off the fine point of a hair shaft so that the emerging hair appears thicker in contrast.