

What really happens when you shave your face



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You may have heard about the female face-shaving craze on the Internet or even from that friend who was obsessed with getting rid of her peach fuzz. Whether you are skeptical of its benefits or simply terrified of cutting your face, it turns out that face shaving is a great way to remove unwanted hair and exfoliate your skin, but only when done properly.

So, what exactly happens when women shave their faces? How does it make the skin look? Does it really impact how the hair grows back? I personally spoke with a panel of experts including Los Angeles based internist Dr. Sal Nadkarni (aka Dr. Sal), Beverly Hills Plastic Surgeon (who you may recognize from *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*) Dr. Sheila Nazarian, New York City based dermatologist Dr. Kristina Goldenberg, Dara Levy, the esthetician that created the DERMAFLASH, and Anthony Sosnick, who is the founder of top selling skincare line, Anthony, to answer all of these questions, and more.

Your skin could become injured if you do not take proper precautions



Dr. Sal's approach to shaving is always safety first: "You have to take precautions and use new blades. [But], I would not suggest using a regular razor. If you are using it for the purpose of getting rid of the hair and exfoliation, you are talking cuts galore. Those blades are extremely sharp."

On the other hand, Anthony thinks using a razor is fine with the proper accoutrements: "I've been doing this for seventeen years. There's nothing wrong with using a razor, as long as you are using the right products, and as long as your skin is properly cleansed before to allow a cleaner, closer shave. Of course it's important to change your razors so they are not dull and to avoid razor burn."

However, Dr. Nazarian thinks shaving your own face isn't the way to go. "It's best to have it done by someone who is experienced and combining it with a light peel afterwards for even more exfoliation," she told me. But if you are going to use a razor, she admits "there is a risk of cutting your face, but it is low."

Your skin will benefit the most if you use the right tool for the job



Both Dr. Nazarian and Dr. Sal believe it is best to use a device designed specifically for the purpose of female face shaving.

Dara Levy, esthetician and creator of the DERMAFLASH, also explained to me why a regular razor isn't the best way for women to shave their faces: "Men grow terminal hair, which is like a piece of copper wire. Women grow vellus hair, which is soft and delicate. Facial shaving [for women] with a razor designed for the tough skin and terminal hair on a man's skin is counterintuitive."

The DERMAFLASH also differs from a razor in its purpose. A razor is primarily designed to remove hair with a secondary benefit of exfoliation. Her product works the opposite way, "[The] DERMAFLASH is an exfoliating treatment that removes built up debris and dead skin cells with the added benefit of temporarily removing peach fuzz," she says.

Furthermore, the DERMAFLASH was designed with several safety mechanisms you can't find on a razor. This includes a perforated alloy sleeve, which is placed over the actual blade and a bull nose at the tip, to prevent accidental scratches and abrasions.

No matter what you use to shave, you absolutely need to prepare your skin



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Anthony says cleansing and exfoliating the area before you shave will help prevent ingrown hairs, unwanted razors burn, etc. He suggests shaving in the shower because "The heat from the steam softens the hairs and helps the hairs stand up as much as 30%, so they will be easier to cut off. Use a non-foaming cream to give you a nice lather because more foam, means more air so the blade can't get as close to your skin as possible."

Dr. Goldenberg noted, "It is important to remember to use a gentle cleanser before [shaving] and an antiseptic cleanser after."

Your face becomes exfoliated



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In addition to removing the hair, shaving also exfoliates the skin. Dr. Goldenberg defines exfoliation as "The process of physically removing dead skin cells from the superficial layers of the skin." The results are that "The skin is left feeling smooth and soft and appears more even."

Exfoliation also helps make our skincare products work better: "Penetration of nutritional skincare products containing important ingredients such as vitamin c, antioxidants, glycolic acid and other ingredients that are often present in moisturizers, toners and face masks is improved," she says, "Also, pores are left clean minimizing the risk of an acne flare up." She generally recommends her patients "exfoliate their skin at least two times a week depending on the sensitivity level of the skin."

Your hair is removed, at least temporarily



While peach fuzz is not unsightly for all women, removing it has other benefits for your appearance in the short term, says Dr. Goldenberg, "Make up goes on more smoothly because of the elimination of peach fuzz in addition to removal of uneven outer layers of the skin." But anyone who has ever shaved knows the hair, whether it's on your legs, underarms, etc, will always grow back.

When celebrity stylist and television personality Ali Levine tried face shaving for the first time using the DERMAFLASH, she told me she was shocked at how affective it was, "Shaving your face is definitely freaky at first, but when I saw the peach fuzz fall off my face, I was really surprised. While I haven't used it since, I know I need to incorporate into my routine."

Dara Levy says it's important that once you start using the DERMAFLASH, you need to keep doing it, "If use is discontinued your skin will go back to the same state it was in prior to use."

The hair will grow back the same way



Many people are afraid to start shaving because they fear in the long term, when their hair grows back, it will look worse. Every expert I spoke with said this is untrue.

Dr. Sal elaborates, "It's a misnomer that the more you shave, the thicker it grows back. That's an old wives tale because you don't get more hair follicles when you shave. The hair may grow back faster, but you don't get thicker hair."

Dr. Goldenberg added, "Shaving will also not cause your hair to grow back darker, [but] getting into the routine of face shaving may or may not do much for your skin or your facial hair situation in the long term." It's important to note that long-term benefits of face shaving have not yet been determined.

Your skin looks better instantly



Ali Levine saw an immediate improvement after shaving her face: "Shaving made my skin feel so much smoother, I had way more of a glow, and my foundation went on like silk."

Dr. Goldenberg (who has not treated Ali) offered up an explanation for that glow: "Face shaving instantly smoothes out the texture of the skin and allows make up to go on a lot more evenly," she says, "Therefore, it is a great technique to use before an event to achieve glowing radiant skin."

Because shaving creates a smoother base for your products, they absorb more readily and the condition of your skin will appear to be improved.

Your skin will need some extra post-shave care



As with any skincare treatment, you need to make sure you take care of your skin afterwards to get the most out of it and to avoid irritation. "You need to use moisturizer when you are done," says Dr. Sal.

In addition to moisturizing, Dr. Sal suggests it's absolutely essential to protect your face with sunscreen, which we all know you should be doing anyway. "Part of the reason why you have hair is that it is a body protector," he says, "[So you need to use] sunscreen after you shave."

Anthony also agrees that moisturizing is one of the most important steps post shaving. He suggests choosing products with specific ingredients including aloe vera, chamomile, allantoin and AquaCactee, which comes from the cactus plant. "It's always important to find [a product] that is both dermatologist and allergy tested."

If you plan on applying makeup post shave, Dr. Goldenberg says you should wait approximately an hour.

Not everyone needs to shave as frequently, but consistency is needed to maintain results



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The results of shaving your face are not permanent. So, in order to keep your glow, you need to shave regularly — though, the necessary frequency can vary from person to person.

Anthony says if you are shaving primarily to remove peach fuzz or hair, the frequency should depend on how long it takes for that hair to grow back. If you are shaving for the purpose of exfoliation, Dr. Sal suggests limiting shaving your face to once a week, but less intense methods of exfoliation can be used more often. However, Dr. Nazarian believes in waiting a little bit longer, "The face can be shaved as often as every two weeks. Most do it once a month." Dara Levy said the DERMAFLASH was designed to be used once a week.

On the other hand, Dr. Goldenberg's approach is that the condition of your skin should determine how often you shave "Women with sensitive skin can develop significant irritation and redness. Women with acne should also avoid face shaving until their acne is under control since this can cause trauma to active acne areas and can also exacerbate an acne flare-up."

Shaving alone won't make your skin won't look any younger



Both Dr. Sal and Dr. Goldenberg support that shaving isn't the way to go if your main skincare goal is to look younger. Dr. Goldenberg stated, "Note that there isn't much evidence that it helps with anti-aging. Certainly if its anti-aging claims were true, those of us that shave every day would look much younger than our actual age." She also says there is potential to do more harm than good if you shave the wrong way. "Some suggest that shaving 'down' actually stretches out collagen and elastic fibers, producing more jowling."

However, you may notice your skin looks younger once you start integrating shaving into your skincare routine because the exfoliation makes all of your skincare products work better, allowing them to penetrate more deeply. So, if you are regularly using anti-aging skincare products and shaving, you might start to notice a difference.

There are alternatives to achieve the same result



Exfoliation is an integral part of a proper skincare routine, but if you are afraid to shave your face, don't worry because shaving is certainly not the only way to do it. Dr. Sal revealed, "Those tiny hairs aka peach fuzz should come off with regular exfoliation [anyway]. If you are hesitant about shaving, just exfoliate. Shaving is just another way to exfoliate. There isn't a major advantage to it if you just have those small little hairs that you can barely see or anyone else can barely see. It's a different story if you actually have a moustache. You might need laser hair removal or electrolysis for that."

Dr. Goldenberg listed some alternatives to shaving, "For those that want to remove dead skin cells, there are many safer and more effective methods, such as cutera excelV laser genesis, microneedling, or CO2 laser for full thickness resurfacing. A little shave won't hurt, but I would not recommend it regularly."

Keep in mind



If you are going to shave your face, no matter how you do it, it's important that you are as careful as possible and do it properly. Anthony suggests when using a razor, it's important to shave in the same direction as the hair growth, and all the experts agreed that fresh blades are the way to go. He noted, "It all comes down to technique and the right product."

If taking a razor to your face still sounds like a horror movie waiting to happen, don't worry — with all of the other methods of both hair removal and exfoliation available, shaving certainly isn't a requirement for having good skin.