

HAIR

How to Remove Facial Hair From Your Chin, Upper Lip, and More

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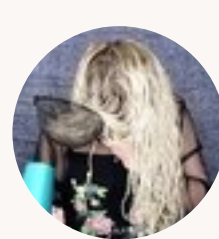


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Picture this: It's a breezy August night and you (by this, I mean me) are curling your lashes with your favorite Dior mascara before heading out to a dinner with your bestie, when you peer into the magnified mirror, gasp, look again, and realize that you (by this, I mean me) have a massive, protruding, curly, dense dark **hair** sticking out of your left nostril.

So I did what every medical professional warns against: I grabbed my trusty **Tweezerman** and went to work, yanking out the stubborn little bastard while my eyes watered. How long had it been there? Who's noticed, but not said anything? Is this the start of a contentious, unruly, hairy relationship that is sure to have a very knotty ending?

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Which brings us to the thorny issue of facial hair in women. How you approach it and what you do about it is a personal choice. And we're talking about an issue different from **hirsutism**, which is unwanted male-pattern hair growth in women on the legs, the back, and other areas — a separate condition entirely.

When it comes to the face, some pluck. Some ignore. And some don't know what to do. So, we consulted a few top derms to get their take on why these unwelcome strands show up, often in ladies as they get older or after they give birth.

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"For a majority of women it is age-related; the hormonal shift begins years before menopause, but accelerates during menopause. There are some underlying hormonal abnormalities that can also cause these changes when women have certain tumors or endocrine conditions. They can cause abnormal hair growth in women independent of age. These women should be evaluated by a doctor," says Rachel Nazarian of Schweiger Dermatology Group in New York City.

AndreyPopov



In even more basic terms, as women age, their estrogen levels decrease. Testosterone, meanwhile, causes us to sprout shrubbery where men have it, in particular on our faces.

"As female hormones normally decline with age, and women's male hormone levels (yes, all normal women have a small amount of male hormone) remain constant, the hair follicles in male distribution respond to the relatively greater amount of male hormone by growing hair in the beard area and losing it **on their scalp** — just as men do as they get older," says Neal Schultz, founder of **DermTV.com** and creator of **BeautyRx by Dr. Schultz**.

The most common spots where you'll notice hairs: the chin, cheeks, and the upper lip. Laser hair removal is a pretty surefire way to get rid of them, as are waxing and threading, but there's no magic potion or silver bullet.

"The most effective way to eliminate unwanted hair in the nose or on the chin is with a laser. This is the only treatment modality available that can permanently eliminate unwanted hair. Thirty minutes of numbing cream will make the treatment comfortable and pain-free," says Kristina Goldenberg of Goldenberg Dermatology in New York City.

But, you're thinking, every drugstore is crammed with creams promising **hairless glory** in mere minutes. Yes, but. There's always a but, you see. "Over-the-counter options are generally limited to depilatories, which break down the chemical bond in hair follicles so they are weak enough to rub off. Depilatory creams and gels can be irritating to gentle facial skin and should be used with caution," says Nazarian.

VladimirFLoyd



Friends of mine take a razor to their faces, which sort of freaks me out. But doctors say it's actually an easy way to get results.

"**Shaving** is safest but less efficient because it must be repeated frequently and is 'unfeminine,' so many women object even to the idea. One thing to note: Shaving does not make the hairs thicker or coarser," says Schultz, dispelling a common myth. "Electrolysis is effective but very time-intensive and sometimes causes scars. Truthfully, there is no perfect method of hair removal other than [by a] laser."

There are plenty of home devices available that zap unwanted hairs. But, says Schultz, resist the lure of the tweezers. "Do not pluck them," he says, especially when it comes to the hairs in your schnoz. "That can cause an infection by the bacteria that normally live inside the nose."

Concurs Nazarian: "Stick to shaving, or one of the permanent solutions to hair removal, like laser or electrolysis."

If you're loath to go the Gillette route, you can try **Vaniqa**, available by prescription. It's "a product that's available for women with unwanted hair. It slows hair growth in the areas in which it is applied. It has to be used for several weeks before a significant result becomes apparent. Unfortunately, no product offers a permanent solution," says Goldenberg.

Which means, for all intents and purposes: Hair today, and hair tomorrow.