

Short- OR long-term hair removal?

There are so many ways of dealing with hairy legs, armpits and bikini lines, all with various pros and cons, that it's hard to say which is right or wrong. For the short-term solution razors are quick and convenient for legs and underarms, but you probably wouldn't want to use them on your bikini line or face. Shaving can also cause irritation, cuts and even infection if the razor is not kept clean. Shave in the direction of the hair growth, and make sure your skin is moist. Consider using a shaving oil (the type men use on their faces); apply body lotion afterwards to keep your skin soft and smooth.

As for supposed longer-term solutions, creams are messier and take longer to use but are a better option for smaller, sensitive areas. They work by dissolving the hair, turning it into a jelly-like substance that can easily be wiped away, and they contain moisturizers to soothe and soften the skin. While the chemicals they contain can be smelly, the industry has got better at masking this with fragrances and also developing different products such as roll-ons, sprays, and varieties that can be used in the shower. Regrowth is softer but not slower than it is with shaving, and creams may cause irritation or allergic reactions: always test on a small patch of skin. They are messier, more time-consuming and more expensive to use than a razor.

Waxing is good because it pulls the hair out from the root – ouch. For the faint-hearted, salon visits are the obvious option, but they are expensive, time-consuming and, of course, not something you would do every day. The same can be said of electrolysis and laser hair removal.

ANSWER: shave (where appropriate)

Did you know?

... that using a razor to shave your legs and armpits does not make the hair grow back faster than if you were using creams or lotions? Shaving does, however, make your regrowth feel more prickly as the hair has been sliced off at an angle. Creams and lotions, on the other hand, dissolve the hair, making the regrowth softer. Normal Caucasian hair growth rate is 1–1.25cm every twenty-eight days.

Hop on the scales OR measure your waist?

If you're watching your weight and step on the scales in the morning, might you be better off reaching for the tape measure to work out if you're piling on the pounds? Scientists are studying this intensively because of international concerns over obesity and the results can be confusing.

One way to assess whether or not you're overweight is to calculate the Body Mass Index (BMI) – your weight in relation to your height. To work it out, divide your weight in kilos by your height in metres squared (or use imperial measures). Several websites do this for you – just Google 'BMI'. A BMI of between 18.5 and 25 indicates a healthy weight.

Some doctors argue that waist circumference is the more useful standard by which to judge excess weight: 'fat around the middle' is the real danger sign. A fat tummy is likely to have fatty organs underneath it, which, particularly for the liver, can be dangerous.

While a March 2011 study by British doctors, for example, disagreed with this, a more recent one in June 2011 in the US