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# WAX ON, WAX OFF

If you could happily go the rest of your life without announcing to anyone that you're there for the "upper lip," well, maybe you should. The market in safe and effective at-home waxing kits is experiencing something of a boom as women look to shave off what can be hundreds of dollars in yearly hair-removal expenses. So before you schedule your next waxing appointment, why not take a stab at DIY? Our guide makes it easier—and relatively goop-free—with tips on everything from preemptive pain relief to what kind of honey to use and where.

## *Before you start ...*

**Time it right** You may be a bit more sensitive to pain just before your period, says Cindy Barshop, founder of Completely Bare spas. Depilate once your cycle has passed.

**Pop a pill** Consider taking an ibuprofen (or two) half an hour before waxing. The anti-inflammatory action of this over-the-counter medicine will help alleviate pain.

**Prime the area** Make sure you gently exfoliate prior to waxing to loosen and remove dead skin; this will help prevent hairs from getting trapped beneath skin, causing ingrowns, says Jessica Coba, CEO of the European Wax Center.

**Don't mix retinoids and waxing** If you're taking Accutane or a Retin-A-based product, which makes skin highly sensitive, stop taking it at least one week before any waxing, says **New Orleans dermatologist Mary Lupo**. Also hold off on topical Retin-A-based products if you'll be erasing facial fuzz. These make skin more sensitive.

**Measure up** For ideal results, hair should be the length of a grain of rice, says Coba. Any shorter and the wax won't adhere well.

**Dry out** Get skin as moisture-free as possible so the wax and cloth strip stick properly, says Barshop. A sprinkle of baby powder will do the trick.

**Pull precisely** Put wax on *with* the direction of the hair growth, and rip off in the opposite direction, almost like you're "turning the page of a book, not pulling straight up in the air," says Barshop.

**Ward off ingrowns** Afterward, smooth on a product with glycolic acid to keep hairs from getting trapped in pores.



Parissa Brow Shaper  
32 Mini Wax Strips and  
Azulene Oil, \$10;  
parissa.com.

Completely Bare  
Sensitive Areas Wax Kit,  
\$13; cvs.com.

## Face

**For the upper lip, use an extra-gentle formula** Choose a wax, like the one above with beeswax, to pamper the thin, sensitive skin above your lips. Look for words such as “noncomedogenic” and “hypoallergenic” on the box as a guide.

**Think mini-sections** Break the upper lip into three regions (left, right, and middle) to ease the ripping effect, says Keisha Pittman, lead aesthetician for Bliss 49.

**For brows, try an eyebrow-specific kit** Wax strips are tailored and specifically shaped for this area and often have a clear backing so you can see what you’re doing. The brow is one region where every single follicle *really* matters, says Barshop. You don’t want any errant globs of sticky wax that might pull hairs off randomly.

**Once is enough** After you’ve waxed, tweeze to nab any strays.

**Soothe skin on the spot** Seeing red? Place something cold (ice cubes, frozen peas, or chilled chamomile tea bags) on the area for five minutes. “This will quickly bring down swelling and redness,” says Barshop. Dry off skin, then dab on hydrocortisone cream to further quell irritation.

There are about  
**120,000**  
hairs  
on the average person’s  
head and close to a  
million follicles on the  
entire body.

SOURCE: THE PHILIP KINGSLEY  
CLINIC, N.Y.C.

**Q** Oops, I waxed my lip just before a big date, and now it looks like I have a red mustache. Help!

**A** When the bag of frozen peas fails you, it’s time to dip into your makeup bag for help. Start by covering the area with a fragrance-free, green-tinted primer (try Smashbox Photo Finish Color Correcting Primer, \$15/.4 ml; sephora.com). “This cool hue will neutralize the redness,” says Los Angeles makeup artist Emily Kate Warren. To avoid any sort of a Hulk-like finish, mix a drop of foundation with a thick cream concealer, then tap it lightly over your greenish ’stache using a damp sponge.

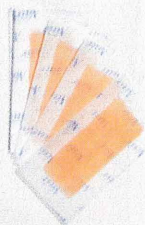




Remington  
Smooth & Silky  
Electric Roll-On  
Wax Kit, \$20;  
walmart.com.



Nair Brazilian Spa  
Clay Body Wax  
Strips, \$8/40;  
drugstore.com.



An online  
American Laser  
Skincare survey  
found that women  
spend an average of  
**\$10,000**  
over the course of  
their lives on hair-  
removal devices  
and services.

## Legs & Arms

**Think big** For broader areas like arms and legs, try either large wax strips or a roll-on device (bonus: Many all-in-one tools automatically heat the wax to the correct temperature). Both save time and let you smooth on a thin coat and remove wide swaths of hair in one quick yank.

**Go for a light touch** Always strive for the sheerest application (holding the applicator at 90 degrees to your knee can help accomplish this on legs, says Pittman). While it may be tempting to be heavy-handed on seemingly tough arms and legs, the skin there can still bruise. Before you remove wax or strips, pull skin taut with your fingertips to minimize pain and redness.

**Catch every strand** Arm hair can sprout in a few directions, so you may have to position strips at several different angles. You can always custom-trim the strips to suit your specific needs.

**Start with your dominant hand** If you're right-handed, do your left arm first so you can get the hang of the process and judge how to accommodate it on the other side.

### **Q** Won't I end up with noticeable stubble if I wax the hairs on my arms?

**A** Not really. When you wax (as opposed to shaving), you're not shearing the hairs off at a blunt angle, which can cause those telltale prickly nubs when the follicles grow back in, says Barshop. By removing the hairs directly from the roots, strands will reemerge finer and less dense.