



HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

# Sexual CONNECTION

## THE GROOMED GROIN

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Pubic hair does have a purpose, providing a cushion against friction that can cause skin abrasion and injury, protection from bacteria and other unwanted pathogens, and is the visible result of long-awaited adolescent hormones, certainly nothing to be ashamed of or embarrassed about. However, there is a trend of pubic hair grooming.

### History of female pubic hair removal

If you look at statues of ancient Greece and Egypt, you will note that they are without pubic hair. It might shock people to realize that pubic hair grooming started way back. Prostitutes of Egypt and Greece had to shave for both hygienic reasons and as a clear sign of their profession. Pubic hair removal was not common among western women until the 20th century. Female body shaving was established as the norm between 1915-1945. Shaving of legs and underarms became acceptable in the early part of the century. Gillette marketed the first razor for women in 1915. The message was that body hair was 'unsightly' and objectionable and needed to be removed. In 1946 when the first bikini was launched, women now were faced with removing pubic hair that might show with this new fashion. In the 1960s and 1970s

women chose to accept their natural body hair and to reject the cultural norms of hairless, childlike feminine beauty. However, in the 1990s, it was becoming more common for women to practice some form of pubic hair removal. Fashion and marketing played a role in pubic hair removal trends. Pornography has also cultivated an image of the sexually attractive woman as one without pubic hair. The growth of online pornography has meant that many men and women consider this image to be the norm.

Some researchers speculate that complete pubic hair removal is a new trend being embraced by the younger generation. 20% of women ages 18-24 practiced full pubic hair removal, vs. only 2% of women over the age of 50 years. An Australian researcher discovered that 95% of women shaved their legs, 98% their underarm hair and 61% practiced some form of pubic hair removal. From the same research, women reported that it made them more feminine and sexually attractive. These reasons are exactly the kind of rationale that serves to keep women insecure about their bodies. The study also found a link between reading fashion magazines and viewing certain television programs and the frequency and amount of pubic hair removal.

Removal of pubic hair has become more and more common, even desirable, among teenagers. Pubic hair removal is a practice that both males and females participate in, it is not only one gender doing it.

**Reasons for Female Pubic Hair Removal** (according to 2010 research on 660 BC women).

- Like the feeling
- Feel attractive
- Feel feminine
- More comfortable
- Men prefer it
- Bathing suit
- Encouraged oral sex
- It's the thing to do
- Partner prefers it
- Oral sex feels better
- It's cleaner

The most common reasons given for pubic hair removal were "it looks better in a bathing suit", "it makes me feel attractive", "I feel feminine" and "more comfortable" and "I think it is cleaner".



## Reasons for Male Pubic Hair Removal

Unfortunately there is little research on males and pubic hair grooming. Limited information is available explaining why males shave their pubic hair. Some reasons include for hygienic reasons, self esteem and looks better. Razor businesses are also marketing new products that have attachments and tools for 'manscaping'. Gillette has an entire marketing campaign on their website aimed at men and pubic hair grooming. Gillette lists the following stats on their website- 81% of women prefer men to style their bodies, 27% of women prefer a smooth groin, 27% of women prefer a trimmed chest and 48% of women prefer a styled groin. Gillette states...'styling your body hair gives you an edge with 3 out of 4 women.' Gillette is telling males what women want, so men are grooming their groins.

## Shaving is a personal choice.

There can be health consequences associated with any type of depilation: shaving, waxing, clipping, tweezing, threading or laser treatment. Your pubic area is especially sensitive to these hair-removal techniques. If you do decide to shave your pubic area, you need to know about the following:

## STIs and pubic hair

Is there an increase risk of contacting a sexually transmitted infection if you shave your pubes? Yes there is!! The latest research shows those who shave are more at risk than those who do not shave. A French dermatologist and a health researcher at Emory University in Atlanta examined adults who had lesions around their genitalia and found that 93% of them had shaved, waxed or otherwise groomed their groins. They went on to state "hair removal, especially shaving, could favour its acquisition, propagation and transmission, by micro traumatism." A recent study published on sexually transmitted infections found that Brazilian waxing and other types of pubic hair removal, including shaving, was a possible link to an increased risk of a viral infection called molluscum contagiosum. Molluscum contagiosum is a poxvirus that can be passed on through sex, but it is also easily spread by self-infection, such as scratching. Researchers say the risk seems higher with shaving

than waxing and that other STIs, such as genital warts, could be more frequent with genital hair removal. Over the past decade, researchers noted that the number of sexually transmitted cases molluscum contagiosum had risen, just as the popularity of pubic hair removal had also increased. Some clinicians are finding that freshly shaved pubic areas and genitals are also more vulnerable to herpes infections due to the microscopic wounds being exposed to viruses carried by mouth or genitals. It follows that there may be vulnerability to spread of other STIs as well.

## ER visits

A 2012 study showed that a growing number of hospital emergency-room visits were for genitourinary injuries caused by grooming. Razor accidents were the most common, accounting for 83% of injuries. There has also been an increase of patients presenting to emergency rooms for burns related to using microwave-heated hair-removal wax.

## Safety for pubic hair removal

- Do not do pubic hair grooming to please a partner
- Do not groom because of societal pressures
- Follow manufacturer's products that are intended for use in the pubic area. Using products that are not meant for the pubic area may result in chemical burns and irritation.
- Do not share razors with others
- Use a new razor blade to prevent cuts and pulls
- If using wax for pubic grooming, follow manufacturer's instructions and be careful not to overheat the wax as it has the potential to reach unsafe temperatures and cause burn injury

## Possible consequences of pubic hair removal

- Itching
- Razor burn
- Nicks & cuts
- Bumps
- Blisters/pimples



- Ingrown hairs
- Genital infections
- Folliculitis: an infection in the hair follicle usually caused by the bacteria staph or a fungus

## Treatments

**If you have already tried shaving/waxing and are experiencing some of the above problems, contact your health care provider for suggested treatment.**

### Shaving Myths:

*Hair will grow back faster.*

**False.** Shaving does not change your rate of hair growth. You will probably just notice the changes more.

*Hair will become thicker.*

**False.** Your body has a set number of hair follicles and no new ones are created after you shave.

*Shaving always creates ingrown hairs.*

**False.** Everyone is different and all are susceptible to ingrown hairs. Some people will get more than others. You do not have to get ingrown hairs every time you shave. There are practices that can help reduce the incidence of ingrown hairs, like washing the area with a loofah or shaving in the direction of hair growth.

*Shaving your pubic area will get rid of crabs and other STIs*

**False.** Pubic lice is highly infective and is transmitted through sexual contact. Shaving will not get rid of the lice, you need to be treated. Furthermore, shaving will not protect you from getting other stis.

## How to shave (for both males and females)

If you decide you want to shave your pubic area, here is a comprehensive how-to guide in 10 easy steps.

1. Go shopping for supplies
  - Pair of sharp scissors
  - A new razor (not disposable razor as they are not as sharp and do not use a dull razor)
  - Female shaving cream (female shaving cream is recommended for both males and females as the products are more mild and gentle)
2. Use the scissors to clip as much pubic hair as possible
3. After cropping as much hair, make sure the area is soft and smooth by soaking in a hot bath or shower for at least three minutes.

4. After the soak, dry off and wait a few minutes to allow skin to recuperate a little.
5. Apply female shaving cream. Do not use soap! Let the cream sit for a few minutes.
6. Use a safety razor to begin shaving
7. When shaving, pull the skin tights and shave without applying pressure. If you need to apply pressure, your razor is too dull.
8. Move slowly over the skin in the counter-direction of the hair. In the pubic area, this means shaving upwards. If prone to ingrown hairs, shave in same direction as hair growth- shave downwards.
9. When you are done shaving, wash the area with lots of warm water
10. Apply aftercare: Apply a cream or lotion such as baby oil to keep skin smooth and free of pimples.

### Links:

[http://www.hnhu.org/images/stories/a\\_z\\_directory/diseases/Be\\_Spa\\_Safe\\_guide\\_AODA.pdf](http://www.hnhu.org/images/stories/a_z_directory/diseases/Be_Spa_Safe_guide_AODA.pdf)

### Reference:

www.Sexualityandu.ca  
National Institute of Health  
Palo Alto Medical Foundation



## Clinic Schedule

### Haldimand and Norfolk Schools

The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (HNHU) is making some changes.

Public Health Nurses (PHNs) from our School Health Team are assigned to every elementary and secondary school.

Check with school administration to find out who your PHN is and when they visit your school.



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