

CLEANUP ACT



Shaving, waxing, threading, plucking... the constantly increasing number of hair removal options is making it difficult to decide what's right for you. We bring you the pros and cons



DOCTALK

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Most of teens face the problem of dealing with underarm hair. Over the years, there has been a shift in the age of adolescence; the secondary sexual characteristics like underarm hair, pubic hair and breast development are increasingly showing up at a younger age. Even the definition for premature menarche (the time when a girl starts her menstrual cycle) has been revised to under eight. The onset of underarm hair may also be at eight or even earlier. Given the nature of the society we live in, it is very difficult to tell the girl that nothing can be done about her underarm hair. We list out all the options available and discuss the pros and cons of hair reduction techniques available today to help you make an informed choice.

WAXING: Over the past few years, this has been the commonest hair reduction technique. It is easy and can be done quickly at a neighbourhood salon. This makes it very convenient. There are also several types of wax available like chocolate, cold and hot. As long as the hygiene levels are good, it is quite safe. The drawbacks are that it is not permanent and one would need to get a wax done every month. It can be slightly painful and there is a risk of in-growing hair and infections due to the procedure.

USE OF RAZORS: The underarm hair can be simply shaved off using a razor. This snips the hair from the surface of the skin and hence will need to be done very frequently. It is not a long-term solution. There is a slight risk of getting cuts in the skin which can then get infected. It is important to use a new blade each time to reduce the risk of infections. The hair growth that happens after use of a razor is quite coarse and can poke



on the skin and irritate you. This however, can be an option in the short-term when the hair growth has just started.

USE OF DEPILATORY CREAMS: There are several depilatory creams available in the market. These creams, when applied on the skin, break the bonds between the hair cells and can snip the hair from the skin surface. Like razors, this needs to be done quite frequently. There is a risk of an allergic or irritant reaction and creams should always be tested behind the ears before use. The advantage of

this is that it can be done at home, is painless and hence convenient. The drawbacks are that it needs to be done very frequently.

USE OF DEPILATORY EPILATORS: There are several epilators available in the market. They essentially physically pull out the hair from the follicle. The benefit is similar to waxing but all the hair may not be pulled out and it is not clean and complete as waxing. It is a method of temporary hair removal and needs to be repeated frequently. The biggest drawback is that it is painful and



WHATEVER TECHNIQUE ONE CHOOSES, IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO IGNORE THE ISSUE OF UNDERARM HAIR IN TEENS. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE ADULT TAKES THE CHILD INTO CONFIDENCE AND HAS AN OPEN DISCUSSION WITH HER



LASER HELPS IN PERMANENT HAIR REDUCTION. IN ADULTS, IT CAN CAUSE A 90 PER CENT PERMANENT LONG-TERM REDUCTION. IT IS THEREFORE, ADVISED ONLY ONCE A GIRL HAS ATTAINED FULL PUBERTY

poorly tolerated in sensitive areas like the underarms. The advantage is the convenience of use. **LASER HAIR REDUCTION:** Relatively speaking, this is the new kid on the block. The laser beam works by penetrating to the depth of the hair follicle and destroying the stem cells at its base. It requires multiple sessions. The accepted minimum age according to the United States FDA for laser hair reduction is 14 years. Most experts, however, recommend waiting till the girl has attained full puberty prior to undergoing laser treatments. If started earlier, the number of sessions required will be high as hair growth keeps increasing till a girl attains full puberty. If the laser is performed by an experienced practitioner and good quality equipment is used, the risks are minimal and include slight redness and bumpiness

of the area being treated. Blistering and change in skin colour can be very rare complications. The teen should be able to tolerate the discomfort associated with the procedure. In children under 18 years, the adult will need to be present as the consent needs to be given by the adult. This is the only technique that causes permanent hair reduction. In adults, one can achieve a 90 per cent permanent long-term hair reduction. Whatever technique one chooses, it is no longer possible to ignore the issue of underarm hair in teens. It is important that the adult takes the child into confidence and has an open discussion lest she resorts to unhygienic means of hair removal. This can be very easily averted by keeping an open mind and dealing with the issue in a mature manner.