

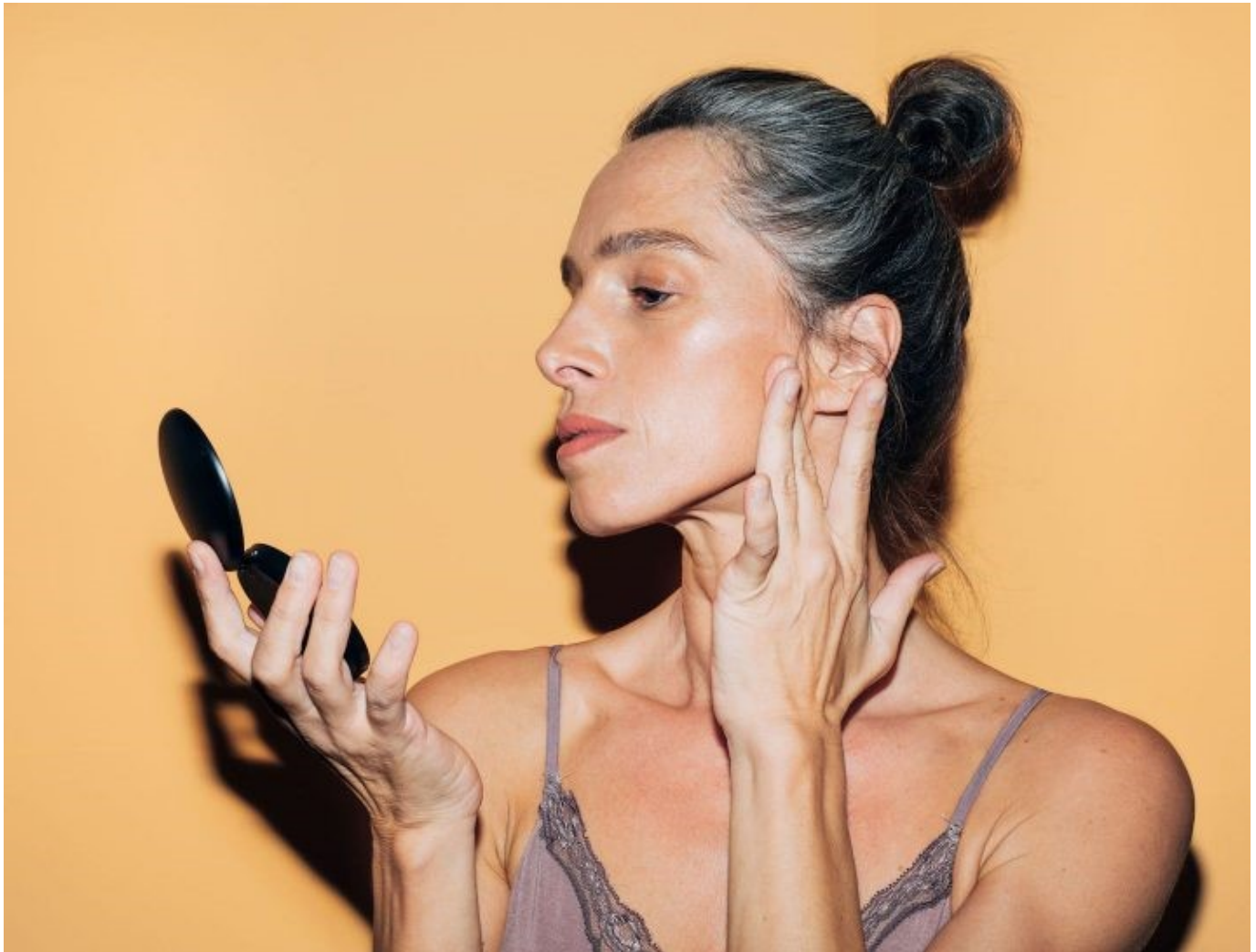
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# THE FINE LINE —

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## Shave Your Face: Yay or Nay?



**Hair removal has long been an integral part of beauty routines. As we age, we require the razor less, but hormonal changes can cause a lady to sprout chin hair or see an increase of facial fuzz — and she might begin to wonder if she should shave her face.**

Women shaving their faces is not a new concept. Rumor has it that Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor did it. With new hair-removal devices coming to market, the notion has even greater appeal. But is shaving the answer to female facial hair? According to celebrity skin care expert **Kate Sommerville** it is. “I hate to say this, but personally I get hairs above my upper lip and have forever,” Somerville says, adding that waxing irritates her sensitive skin. “Initially I did it because of the hair, but then I noticed that it was a great exfoliant and that my makeup went on a lot better.”

Despite being an innocuous beauty ritual, women shaving their faces remains relatively taboo. Yet some women are openly discussing the need to — and joy in — shaving their faces. Dinah DeJesus says she shaves her face weekly. “In my late 40s, I found facial hair was out of control,” she says. “I started waxing at the salon but had a reaction. I tried a Finishing Touch pen, but it didn’t give me the smooth skin I was looking for. Now I use a straight razor with shaving cream.” So is it for you?

## **THE CASE FOR YAY**

Regardless of age, women grow vellus hair — translucent, baby-fine hair — on their faces. Though it’s most noticeable on the upper lip, often starting as an “IUD mustache,” thanks to the progestin in the device, **perimenopause** and menopause can bring about more coarse hair (fondly called “terminal hairs”) on the chin and upper lip.

Waxing can certainly remove hair and is often recommended by aestheticians, but it can take a toll on skin — sensitive or acne- or rosacea-prone skin in particular. For some, it brings out **hyperpigmentation**, drawing even greater attention to a mustache.

**HORMONES ARE THE ONLY THING THAT CHANGE HAIR GROWTH. SHAVING DOES NOT AFFECT KERATIN CELLS, SO HAIR WILL NOT COME BACK DARKER OR THICKER.**

But shaving benefits are plenty, including exfoliation and encouraging new skin growth. According to Dr. Michael Prager, an aesthetic clinician in London, “Shaving can stimulate collagen production in the skin due to the dermabrasive effect.”

Joshua Zeichner, director of Cosmetic & Clinical Research in Dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, agrees that shaving gives you more than a smoother appearance. “By creating microscopic damage to the skin and allowing the skin to heal, shaving may promote collagen production similar to the way a superficial peel works.” Shaving also helps skin care products absorb

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better.

The biggest reservation for women? Fear of hair growing back darker and/or courser. But Somerville reminds us, “**Hormones** are the only thing that change hair growth.” Shaving does not affect keratin cells, so hair will not come back darker or thicker.

## THE CASE FOR NAY

Women with skin care issues from acne to eczema should steer clear of shaving. Shaving overactive lesions in these instances may cut or inflame skin, increasing chance of infection.

There are multiple hair removal alternatives, depending on the color and texture of the hair and where it’s sprouting. Waxing technology has improved as companies recognize the importance of skin care benefits. **Flamingo** is a new hair-removal brand that sells gel face wax strips that are easier to use than the traditional waxing regimen, as well as razors.

Depilatory creams are for easy hair removal at home. The prescription drug Vaniqa can reduce hair growth. The downside: Stop the drug and the hair returns.

For more permanent results, laser hair removal is an option. It’s best suited for those with coarser, darker hair and can be used on a large area. For all hair types there is electrolysis, which destroys each hair follicle individually.

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## THE VERDICT

Facial shaving has outstanding skin care benefits, but it's not for everyone. Dr. Debbie Palmer, boardcertified dermatologist and co-founder and medical director of Dermatology Associated of New York, is wary to suggest it for women who have a change in facial hair (she says you should discuss this with your doctor, as it could indicate hormonal imbalance), suffer from folliculitis (inflamed hair follicles), or are susceptible to ingrown hairs.

If you do decide to shave, be sure you have the right tools and technique. Choose a quality razor or dermaplaner (the clinical term for a straight-edge facial razor) and follow Dr. Palmer's

recommendation: After wetting your face, apply a shaving cream (or gel) and shave in the direction of hair growth. Follow up with an antioxidant moisturizer. “The shaving will allow for better penetration of your antioxidant, and the antioxidant will help to minimize inflammation and irritation,” she says.

*PHOTOS: STUDIO FIRMA; COURTESY OF FLAMINGO*