Epilator Side Effects

Before I used an epilator for the first time, I researched epilation like a maniac. Because of this, I had a good idea of all the possible epilator side effects and how to prevent them. So many of the epilator horror stories I've read on the internet could be prevented by knowing this information before you buy and use an epilator.

So what are the side effects of using an epilator? Common epilator side effects include pain, redness, swelling, and ingrown hairs. Less common side effects include bleeding, swelling, red bumps, pimples, rashes, whiteheads, bacterial infections, pinched skin, bruising, itchy regrowth, and scars.

Sounds scary! BUT! Most of these side effects are not inevitable. And many go away as you get used to epilating. Thankfully, there are tons of things you can do to prevent them from happening. Read on to find out the risks of epilation, how to prevent side effects, and how to treat unwanted side effects and epilation accidents.

Pain

One of the most common side effects of using an epilator is pain. Since you are pulling hairs from the root, you will experience some pain. However, the level of pain experienced varies widely from one person to another.

The good news is that the pain usually subsides after the first few epilation sessions. Many long term users, including myself, can epilate without feeling pain. So if you can get through the first few times, you'll probably be fine with epilating long term. Until then, try ice before and after epilation to prevent pain or check out my post on how to make epilating less painful for more ideas.

Skin Redness

One of the other most common side effects of epilating is redness. The hair follicle becomes slightly inflamed after you pull out a hair by the root. This activates the body's defensive responses which results in skin redness.

You should expect some redness after every session, but this usually goes away within a few hours.

The easiest way to deal with this is to epilate at night before bed. Then your skin has time to recover before you will be in public. However, if you want to speed up the skin's recovery process, use ice or a anti-inflammatory cream to soothe your skin after epilation.

Bleeding and Red Dots

I've never experienced bleeding with epilation, but it is a well-known side effect of pulling hairs out by the root. The idea of bleeding may make epilation sound terrifying, but it's perfectly normal and not anything to be worried about.

Each hair follicle is connected to a blood vessel, so if you pull it out when it's in the growth stage, a little bleeding is perfectly normal. Your body will respond quickly by swelling at the pore to cut off blood flow, so bleeding doesn't last long. Then your body will reabsorb any blood left in the pore.

If epilation causes bleeding or red dots from blood for you, you're most likely to see it after your first time epilating in tight-pore areas or areas with thick, coarse hair such as the underarms or pubic area.

As your hair roots become weaker, bleeding tends to stop happening. So the best way to deal with this side effect is to keep the area clean to avoid infection and expect it to go away within a few sessions.

If you see bleeding happening beyond the first few epilation sessions, you may need to use an epilator with a lower speed.

Other causes of bleeding include medications or health issues. Some medications, including NSAIDs (non steroid anti-inflammatory drugs) such as Tylenol, thin the blood, which makes bleeding more likely. Health issues that affect blood clotting often cause bleeding so talk to your doctor if you seem to be bleeding more than normal.

Swelling

As mentioned, after hairs are pulled from the root, each pore swells a little to prevent bleeding. And if your body is feeling a little too hypervigilant in that moment, your pores may swell enough to be noticeable, making your skin look swollen.

You're most likely to see swelling on sensitive areas of the body including the underarms, bikini areas, or your upper lip. Thankfully, swelling is normal and temporary and should go away within minutes or hours. To speed up the process, apply ice to the area for about 10 minutes at a time.

Red Bumps, Pimples, Rashes, and Spots

Now we are venturing into the more significant and not always harmless side effects of epilation: bumps, pimples, rashes, and various spots. Some of these are pretty easy to deal with and others can cause serious health issues, but they all look pretty similar. So to pinpoint what exactly you're dealing with, you need to know if it's caused by bacteria or an inflammatory response by the body.

Bacterial Infection: Whiteheads, Pimples, and Folliculitis

Bumps and rashes caused by a bacterial infections will typically look like small whiteheads or red pimples. There may just be one bump or a cluster of many together. They usually appear 24-72 hours after you use an epilator and most commonly appear on the chest, back, or upper lip.

Bacterial infections after an epilation are caused by bacteria getting into the pores. This happens when you don't clean your epilator after each use or share an epilator with other people. It can also happen if you touch freshly epilated skin with dirty hands or if bacteria-carrying sweat gets into your pores.

The best way to prevent a bacterial infection is by only touching your skin with clean hands and avoiding working out or other activities that cause you to sweat a lot for about 24 hours after epilating. You should also make sure that any clothing you wear after epilation is clean.

Once you have a bacterial infection, it's best to consult your primary care doctor or dermatologist for medical advice.

Histamine Bumps After Epilating

If you experience bumps almost immediately after epilation or you experience red itchy bumps, hives, or welts, you are most likely experiencing an inflammatory or allergic reaction. This is often known as histamine bumps. These bumps can appear anywhere, but are most common on the chest, lips, cheeks, or around the eyes.

Does this mean you're allergic to epilation? Not exactly.

When tissue is injured, your body's defense system reacts so to protect and heal. And this reaction can involve a release of histamine from mast cells, which are also released when your body reacts to allergens.

Basically, your body is just over-reaching to the situation. This could end up being a one off fluke, which means you can continue to epilate without problems. Or in some cases, it becomes your body's bad habit, and you will have this reaction every time you epilate.