
Recent Advances in Methods of Hair Removal

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Abstract

Deliberate hair removal through permanent or temporary methods is prevalent since ancient times which are gaining increasing importance with every passing day. Purpose of hair removal may vary from beauty enhancement, hygiene, and social status to religious compulsions. Though banned in some communities there is evidence for the aesthetics industry growing at pace of 15-20% annually.

Hair removal techniques have evolved from tweezers, pumice stones, bees wax, sugar based waxes, razors made from flints, bandages soaked in ammonia and vinegar to shaving, depilatory powders and creams, electrolysis, and lasers. Among these, Pumice stone is ancient method for temporary hair removal and Laser is the most effective technique for permanent hair removal. This paper reviews the various temporary and permanent methods of hair removal since their advent.

Introduction

Hair grows nearly all over the human's body which differ in texture and thickness. Males have thicker and coarse body hair as compared to females but the urge to remove unwanted hair is same among both sexes. Research shows that hair removal is achieved since ancient times but the reasons behind need for hair removal changed with the passage of time and a few of them are social norms, religious customs, prevention of lice, prevention from enemy, cleanliness etc. Previously, it was considered as a status symbol and was meant for high society only. At that time, seashells were used as tweezers and sharp edge stones were used as razors but with the advancement in techniques, today, there are a number of hair removal devices ranging from cheap prices to expensive prices that includes temporary as well as permanent hair removal methods^{1,2}.

Ancient Hair removal techniques

Cavemen

Historical pictographic evidences are proof of prevalence of hair removal since cave's men times. It is supposed that the reason behind hair removal was to circumvent lice and mites (as people did not wash their hair), enemy as they could seize their hair during fight, it is

believed that shells and very pointed stones were used for hair removal. But the disadvantage was that they could sometimes tear the skin also ^{3,4}.

Ancient Egypt

Although Ancient Egyptians have been predecessors of numerous beauty enhancing practices, but they paid special attention to hair removal practices. Cleopatra was considered as a leading light for beauty uplifting practices. Women during that time used to remove hair from the whole body except their eyebrows, as females having intimate area hair and males with beard and moustaches were supposed to be uncivilized. People without hair were considered to be included in high rank society. In fact, the techniques of hair removal using pumice stones, sugaring, tweezers (typically prepared from sea shells), razors (flint or bronze) and beeswax were originated by high class Egyptians, and modified type of these methods are quite much prevalent nowadays ^{5,6}.

Roman Empire

Romans are the second predecessors, after Egyptians, who are known for their esthetic sense. Like Egyptians, hairless body was recognized as status symbol in the era of Roman Empire. Males and females with pubic hair were depicted uncivilized and lower class. Tweezers, Stones, Razors (flint) and chemical preparations were the techniques used by upper rank⁷.

Medieval period Hair removal techniques

Middle Ages

As Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth I was also followed for her beauty techniques. At that time, eyebrow and forehead hair removal (for illusion of larger forehead) was a trend. Among the techniques used by them, the most famous were rubbing walnut oil, vinegar or ammonia soaked bandages. Mothers used to rub walnut oil on their baby's body for nourishment and growth ⁸.

1700s

Modernized 18th century people moved towards hair removal in a more sophisticated manner. A French hair stylist, J.J. Perret, developed an L-shaped razor for men in 1760 ⁹. Sugaring, Tweezing and Shaving were most used methods during 18th century.

1800s

The first depilatory cream was formulated, by Dr. Gouraud in United States, named as Poudre Subtile. The depilatory creams are very much used these days and is a very efficient method of hair removal. Later on, King Camp Gillette designed a high class razor for men that proved to be very effective and got popular very soon as it was a L-shaped razor that reduced the chances of damage¹⁰.

Afterwards, Dr. Charles Michel invented electrolysis treatment for permanent hair removal. It was very painful but marvellous method of hair removal¹¹.

Early 1900s

In 1907 an X-Bazin hair shedding powder came into commercialization that assured to eliminate unwanted hairs on arms, face and neck. Ten years later a top fashion magazine rushed with an advertisement marked with exposed underarms. King camp Gillette shaped first razor exclusively for women in 1915, named Milady Decolletee¹².

1940s

The first women electric razor was brought by Remington rampage. It became the more reliable method than the others that were earlier used in '50s. Due to shortfall in nylon during war women's were strained to go exposed legged. This pushed the market to manufacture a special product for women hair removal¹³.

1950s

During 1950s, Tweezers and razors were the most prevalent methods among women as they did not harm skin. No doubt, Depilatory treatment was also present but was not preferred due to skin irritation caused by chemical based creams¹⁴.

1960s

Wax strips rapidly turned into the first alternative for unwanted hair removal as it came into the introduction during early 1960s. After that First laser hair removal came into introduction in middle of 60s but was not able to reach the heights of popularity because of its skin bruising effects and was not approved by FDA¹⁵.

1970s

No doubt electrolysis came into introduction around 100 years ago but it reached the phase of popularity during 1970s with its safe and developed quality. This era also had rebirth in the bikini hair removal due to the swimsuit trends in 1960s ¹¹.

1980s

First electric epilation device was invented in 1980's, which declared to perform around 1 lakh tweezings per minute. In other words, it was called Electronic Tweezer as it pulls hair just like an ordinary tweezer ¹⁶.

Modern Hair removal techniques

In 1990, Lasers hair removal got approved by FDA, Food and Drug Administration. Ruby laser, Diode laser, Alexandrite laser, Nd:YAG laser are quite popular these days for permanent results.

Electrolysis is another method for permanent hair removal but is quite painful as compared to laser. Along with laser and electrolysis, other temporary methods like Tweezing, shaving, sugaring and waxing are also popular nowadays ^{17,18,19,20,21}.

Conclusion

Nowadays, the act of removing unwanted hair, among males as well as females, has become a part of routine. It is no longer a part of high society only. There are a variety of depilatory

methods ranging from low to high cost such as threading, tweezing, Shaving, sugaring, waxing, depilatory creams, electrolysis and laser. People prefer methods according to their affordability and requirement.

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