

V L E H A N V E R E N I G I N G
 ● L E V E R A N C I E R S ● H U
 I S H O U D E L I J K E ● A P P
 A R A T E N ● N E D E R L A N D

Julia Roberts got it wrong



As soon as summer arrives, women in the Netherlands take a closer look at their bodies. Should I shed a few pounds? Should I visit a sunbed and acquire a pre-summer tan? Is my summer wardrobe up-to-date? And if deemed necessary, immediate action is taken. This will nearly always involve time, money and effort. There is one aspect however, that can be dealt with immediately: getting ready to enjoy a summer of smooth legs and armpits. Epilators and electric hair removal devices are growing in popularity.

Undoubtedly a hairy body was useful in ancient times. Even nowadays it would be a lot harder to sweat without eyebrows; and having drops falling in your eyes would be very distracting. Yet in most cultures there is a consensus on female body hair: as little as possible under the armpits, on the lower legs and bikini line. The incident where Julia Roberts walks down the red carpet waving, with a guinea pig under her arms, did nothing for her image, and it certainly did not become a new trend!

The ancient Egyptians used a mixture of oil and honey for waxing, and nowadays modern women use whatever modern technology has to offer. Almost a quarter of European women choose to use an epilator or use an electric device, and their numbers are growing fast. These methods not only ensure that undesirable hair growth takes longer to regrow, but it also makes hair removal an altogether easier job.

Did you know that

- women start shaving at a young age? In Europe young women start shaving their legs and armpits between the ages of fourteen and fifteen. In the United States on average women are a year younger.
- a third of all women shave their pubic hair in a 'landing strip' (a 'Brazilian')? A quarter of all women shave their bikini line, and another quarter removes everything. The rest choose a triangular shape or something more creative.
- it is an old wives tale that hair grows back thicker? Hair that has been removed close to the roots, such as when removed using an electric device, is softer than hair that has been removed with a razor. Regrowth is always darker, because it has not been bleached by sun, water, soap or cream.
- 'hair in summer' grows faster than 'hair in winter'? During the warm season the blood circulation improves, which results in more nourishment for your hair. This means hair grows faster during a warm spell, even the hair on your head!
- women remove their unwanted hair because they experience it as more hygienic and more beautiful? Other motives are because it feels better or because their partner finds it more exciting.
- it can take up to four weeks for a hair to grow back? This may vary per person and per part of the body, but the closer you shave to the hair root, the longer it takes to grow back. The hair root lies up to four millimetres under the skin and can be reached best using an epilator.
- increasingly more men remove their hair? Especially sportsmen prefer a smooth body. You rarely see hairy bodybuilders; their hair would get in the way when oiling their muscular body!

What methods are there to choose from?

The great advantage of using an electric device to remove hair, is that nowadays you can do it whenever you want, no matter where you are. Rechargeable hair removal devices offer you the freedom to remove hair where and when you like. The devices can be used either 'wet' or 'dry'. The new generation of hair removers offers the opportunity of removing hair with water and shaving foam or have a 'dry' option.

With an epilator, a device with a rotating head that is covered in small tweezers, the hair is removed by the roots, allowing it to stay away for up to four weeks. Although the epilator might cause an uncomfortable feeling at first, you very soon get used to it.

Removing hair with an electric device, as with the epilator, is a method that is done 'dry': no more showering with creams and foams, but hair removal whenever it suits you. An electric razor raises the individual hairs slightly allowing the small razors to cut the hair off.

With this method the hair grows back sooner, but the advantage is that electric hair removal is completely painless.



There is another technique for electrically removing hair, which beauty specialists apply to small areas such as the top lip. A needle is used to deliver electricity to the hair follicle, and after heating and destroying the hair follicles the hairs are pulled out with tweezers. Permanent or definite hair removal cannot be guaranteed with any hair removal method. Although of course modern equipment will lessen the number of visible hairs.

Pain a thing of the past

Manufacturers are continuously improving the ease of use and techniques of epilators and electric hair removal devices. In order to reduce the pain during hair removal, new massage and cooling systems have been introduced. The design is also very important, as the female body has typical shapes and curves. The exterior of the device has been adapted to suit the female taste: rounder, softer shapes and colours.

Not just a recent fashion fad

Hair removal is not just a recent fashion fad. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans preferred a smooth female body. Their methods for achieving this are largely similar to the way we still do it. Tweezers, wax or a precursor of our hair removal cream would ensure that not a single hair remained on their bodies! Especially in the Middle East this was taken quite literally. The European crusaders took these customs back home with them to our regions and consequently by 1600 it was quite normal for European women to remove their pubic hair and the hair under their arms. Catharina de Medici, Queen of France, forbade her ladies-in-waiting to remove their pubic hair, and during Victorian times the custom died out completely. Not until the nineteen sixties was hair removal rediscovered and has now become an accepted custom.



Real progress has been made where the device touches the skin. In order to cut unwanted hair as short as possible, the device either lifts each hair before it shaves or it tightens the skin. This is done by applying clever innovations such as foils, trimmers and strips. Many women use multiple methods, such as a razor for their armpits and an epilator for their bikini line. Presently this is no longer necessary. The latest generation of epilators has several shaver heads and is suitable for all parts of the body.

Some preferences			
	Worldwide	Europe	USA
Wet shave	66%	51%	88%
Electric shave	6%	10%	6%
Hair removal cream	5%	7%	3%
Waxing	15%	18%	1%
Epilator	7%	12%	1%

(source: Gillette)