Guide to Eco-friendly Shaving

Our bodies naturally produce body hair to protect us from the elements. The healthiest most natural thing you can do with your body hair is to leave it the way it is. American society has worked very hard to promote hairless bodies as the norm, despite the problems with it. Body hair preferences should be left up to each individual person. Should you decide that you do want to get rid of your body hair, I've created a guide for the best way to do this for your health and the environment.

I was no-shave for years. As a teenager in high school, I became fed up with the societal pressure and standard of beauty for women surrounding their body hair. I decided to give it up. I knew that choice was better for the environment and by far the best alternative to eco-friendly shaving, buying a reusable razor, and making my own shaving cream. Yes, skipping it all together was by far the best option.

That was three years ago. I've learned quite a bit since my experiment. I've learned that people today really don't care what you do with your body hair. I've learned that shaving takes a lot of time, and since giving it up, I've saved time, water, and money. I've also learned that I prefer the look and feel of shaved legs. All other body hair is fine. I've even grown to appreciate it. But I couldn't shake missing the look and feel of shaved legs. So I took the plunge and decided to give it a shot again.

My sister had some extra razors laying around, so I borrowed one and used some soap she had on hand (that I deemed better that her shaving cream). Here's what I found.

If I'm not taking proper care of myself and I'm not eating as well as I should, if I use cheap razors and soap, the inflammation in my body can cause some minor razor bumps.

Regular soap is terrible. It dries out my skin and furthers

the minor irritation I was feeling as a result of the inflammation.

Smooth legs are great, but they don’t last very long. Without a super close shave, within 12 hours my leg hair is already growing back. So as much as I enjoy shaved legs, it probably won’t be a regular thing for me.

Lastly, I found cheap razors do not deliver a close shave. They’re really terrible.

Regular razors and regular shaving cream can often cause razor burn and other skin irritation. This, more often than not, is a health problem caused by too much inflammation. Using a high-quality simple shaving cream with a safety razor (along with the proper diet) can help eliminate this problem.

Your disposable razor is doing more harm to the environment than you realize. Just like straws and plastic bags, razors are another disposable plastic product that is ending up in our landfills and oceans. The EPA reported in the 1990s that America produced 2 billion disposable razors and blades a year. Recent reports show that 163 million people buy disposable razors each year.

In addition to the environmental impacts, plastic is a known carcinogen. Using your plastic disposable razor won’t cause cancer all on its own, but we should all be actively working to detoxify from plastic toxicity and avoid it whenever possible. The culmination of our massive plastic use coupled with our poor diets and inability to detox has ultimately led to a society that is much sicker than it used to be.

So, what’s the alternative? If your disposable razors are wreaking havoc on the environment as well as irritating your skin, and the no-shave lifestyle isn’t for you, I’ve got an alternative.

Safety Razors

Safety razors are reusable razors similar in design to your current disposable razor. The big difference is that you don’t throw them away. They use a single razor blade that you replace when necessary. The single blade design coupled with the weight of the razor delivers a closer shave than your modern disposable razor.

Safety razors have been around for generations, and they seem to be making a comeback. Shaving enthusiasts enjoy the process of shaving with a quality safety razor. Most people find they deliver a closer, smoother shave with less irritation.

Similar to reusable menstrual products, safety razors can be a bigger investment initially, but save money in the long run. You can buy a quality safety razor for under $50, and then you may never have to buy another one again.

For the purpose of this article, I bought a vintage Gillette safety razor for around $15. You can buy a safety razor new, but if the environment is your top priority, buying used is best. You’ll also be likely to get a better razor for your money if you buy vintage.

Through my research, I decided to go with Gillette, because Gillette safety razors from the 1940s-1970s seem to be widely considered some of the best safety razors available.

I tested out the safety razor with three different shaving creams: Skintimate shaving cream, Dr. Bronner’s shaving soap, and homemade shaving cream.

Shaving with a safety razor is slightly different than shaving with a disposable razor. There’s no need to apply pressure like you would with a multi-blade disposable razor. Just hold the razor at a 45-degree angle and allow the weight of the razor to cut the hair. The weight of the razor and the

sharpness of the blade is enough to deliver a close shave without the extra pressure. It might take some time to get the hang of the new technique. It can be easier to knick yourself with a safety razor, especially when you're first learning to use it. Using the razor is not my area of expertise, so this article goes into detail about how to use a safety razor.

The safety razor did provide a closer shave than a regular razor, although I'm not sure I would have noticed much of a difference between the two had I not heard that safety razors provide a closer shave.

In order to ensure the closest shave possible, you should exfoliate beforehand. I didn't! Getting the closest shave wasn't my top priority, so I didn't go through the process of making an exfoliator at home. Not to mention the process of exfoliating can irritate the skin.

I washed my legs first in an attempt to scrub some of the dirt off and used hot water to make sure the hair follicles were soft enough. Using the safety razor was very simple. I was worried I would have to be extra careful to ensure that I didn't cut myself, but it was easy. I found that shorter strokes worked better compared to the longer strokes you might use with a disposable multi-blade razor.

Shaving Cream

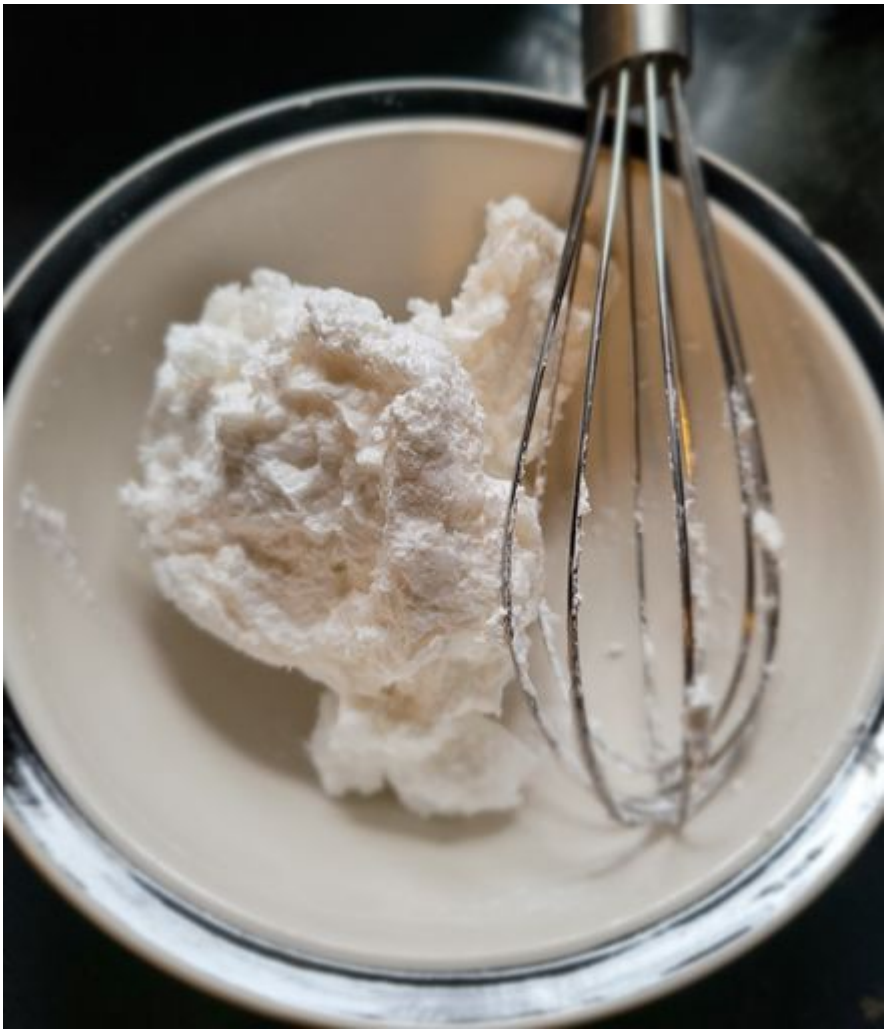
Shaving creams, like most soaps and face washes, are full of synthetic fragrances and chemicals that are bad for your health and can irritate your skin. Going to the store and buying a disposable can of shaving cream for a couple of bucks only to throw it away in a couple of months is definitely not something I've missed since giving up shaving. However, for the sake of this article, I went to the store, bought a can of shaving cream, tested it out, and compared it to my homemade method. I also compared the cheap shaving cream to Dr. Bronner's shaving soap.

The homemade shaving cream I tried was super simple and only had three ingredients. It was also a lot of fun to make!



- 1 cup of Dr. Bronner’s Pure Castile soap
- 3/4 cup of Baking soda
- 1 1/2 cup of Water

Read the original recipe here. It goes into more detail, but it’s pretty simple. Stir all your ingredients together on the stove and heat on medium-high. After the ingredients foam up to the rim of the pot, remove it from the heat and allow it to cool. After it cools, take out the foam that has separated from the liquid, with a slotted spoon. In another bowl whip the foam to the consistency that you like, and then store it in a mason jar.



The cheap shaving cream from the drugstore caused skin irritation. It burned slightly upon application and later, my skin was itchy. I broke out in razor bumps almost immediately, and it dried out my skin more than the other ones did.



Dr. Bronner’s shave soap works just fine. It wasn’t a miracle product that amazed me, but it’s a perfectly good shaving soap and it’s high quality. It’s a little on the pricey side, and it might be hard to find outside of a health food store.



All of the products dried out my skin at least to some degree. I find that anytime I use soap, no matter how good it is, it does dry out my skin as it strips my body of its natural oils. If you find that soap dries out your skin as well, I would recommend using coconut oil on your legs after you shave, as opposed to a regular lotion.

I recommend the homemade version above any other version. It's by far the most affordable and gets the job done just as well if not better than any shaving cream I've bought at a store. This version also has the lowest carbon footprint, since you're making it yourself.

Conclusion

I don't shower on a regular basis, so I won't be shaving all the time, But when I do, I'll be using a safety razor and homemade shaving cream. Do not underestimate the power of a

good quality shaving cream. I noticed a massive difference between the cheap can I picked up from the drug store and the shaving cream I made at home.

For the most organic/eco-friendly lifestyle, I would recommend forgoing shaving altogether, but I get that that’s not realistic for everyone. If you are going to shave, making your own shaving cream and using a safety razor are likely your best options, both for your health and the environment. If you make the switch from a disposable razor and cheap shaving cream to eco-friendly alternatives, you’ll likely notice a difference.

Sources:

- *How To Shave Your Legs With A Safety Razor*
- *DIY Eco-Friendly Shave cream*
- *2 Billion Tossed Per Year: What’s The Most Wasteful Bathroom Product?*