

'Brazilians' and other types of pubic hair removal may boost viral infection risk

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"Brazilians" and other types of fashionable pubic hair removal may boost the risk of a viral infection called *Molluscum contagiosum*, suggests a small study published online in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Infections*.

Historically, pubic hair used to be removed for religious or cultural reasons, but in recent decades it has become fashionable to shave it off, with men also increasingly following the trend, say the authors.

Molluscum contagiosum is a [pox virus](#), which is relatively common in children and people whose immune systems are compromised by illness or drugs. But it can also be passed on through sex, and over the past decade the number of sexually transmitted cases has risen.

The authors wanted to know if the rise in in the number of such infections was connected to the increasing popularity of pubic hair removal among patients who visited a private skin clinic in Nice, France, between January 2011 and March 2012.

Of the 30 cases infected with *Molluscum contagiosum* during this time, six were women, and the average age of the entire group was 29.5.

Signs of the infection (pearly papules) had spread up to the [abdomen](#) in four cases and to the thighs in one. In 10 cases, there were other associated [skin conditions](#), including ingrown hairs, [warts](#), folliculitis (bacterial skin infection), [cysts](#) and scars.

Among the 30 patients, most (93%) had had their pubic hair removed, with most opting for shaving (70%). Among the rest, it had either been clipped (13%) or waxed (10%).

As the *Molluscum contagiosum* can spread relatively easily by self infection, such as scratching, hair removal might also facilitate transmission as a result of the micro trauma it causes to the skin, suggest the authors.

They go on to speculate about the reasons for the popularity of pubic hair removal.

"The reasons for choosing genital hair removal remain unclear, but may be linked with internet based pornography ... increased sexual sensation ... an unconscious desire to simulate an infantile look ... or a desire to distance ourselves from our animal nature," they write.

More information: www.sti.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/sti.2012.050982

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