

Using a hair removal gel or cream? Here's how to do it safely

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(HealthDay)—When hair sprouts where you don't want it, you can

always shave, but other ways to remove unwanted body hair can last longer.

The downside: Chemical hair removers can cause burning, itching or redness.

"Hair removal creams, lotions and gels are quick and easy to use, but they can sometimes irritate the [skin](#)," dermatologist Dr. Andrea Mabry said in an American Academy of Dermatology news release. "Before applying the product to a large area, like your legs, it's a good idea to test out the product first."

Mabry suggests applying a quarter-sized amount to the area where the unwanted hair is located. Keep it on your skin for the time recommended in the instructions—or less if your skin starts stinging or burning.

Rinse the product off, then wait 24 hours. Don't use the product again if you experience pain, redness, itching or burning. If after 24 hours you've had no irritation, you can use the product.

A hair-removal [cream](#) works best when you apply it in a thick, even layer, Mabry said. Don't rub. Don't put it on a cut, scar or mole.

Wash your hands after applying, then gently wipe off the cream where you're removing hair at the recommended time. Rinse with lukewarm water and pat dry.

"Hair-removal products can make your skin more sensitive for a short while after using them," Mabry said. "If you develop [skin irritation](#) after using a hair-removal cream, lotion or gel, or if you have questions about at-home hair removal or other options for [hair](#)-removal, talk to a board-certified dermatologist."

Mabry recommends using only gentle, fragrance-free products to avoid irritation, and protecting the skin from the sun for 24 hours after application. The best ways: Seek shade when outdoors, wear sun-protective clothing, and apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher to all uncovered skin.

More information: On the subject of smooth skin, the American Academy of Dermatology Association offers some additional [skincare tips](#).

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