

## From Hair Loss to Shaving: Dispelling the Myths of Men's Skin Care

When you think about the problems men have with their skin, hair and nails, male pattern baldness, razor burn and bumps, unwanted tattoos, excess body hair, and fungus often spring to mind. The bad news is that these are very common problems that almost all men, at one time or another, will experience. The good news is that, despite the myths associated with them, these problems can be successfully treated with the help of a dermatologist.

Speaking today at the American Academy of Dermatology's (Academy) skin academy 2005, dermatologist Bruce E. Katz, M.D., clinical professor of dermatology, Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, debunked the common misconceptions that abound about men's skin care.

"While many studies have shown that men prefer to avoid medical care, they don't have to live with skin, hair and nail problems," said Dr. Katz. "Now, more than ever before, dermatologists have a wide variety of tools at their disposal to help men improve and maintain the health of their skin."

### **Myth: Your mother's father is to blame for your hair loss.**

**Fact:** While it's generally accepted that the mother's side of the family controls the destiny of men's hair, that's actually not the case. The tendency can be inherited from either the mother's or father's side of the family. There is no cure for hair loss, although medical treatments that block the formation of testosterone in the hair follicle may help some people. One treatment is minoxidil, a topical preparation that is applied to the scalp twice a day, and the other is a daily pill containing finasteride. Hair transplantation—moving some hair from hair-bearing portions (donor sites) of the head to bald or thinning portions (recipient sites) is another option.

"A dermatologist can help you determine which treatment option will work best for your particular hair loss problem," Dr. Katz said. "Some men prefer a quicker but more invasive solution like hair transplantation, while others want to stick to a slower but easier to use regimen of topical or oral medications."

### **Myth: You can't do anything about razor bumps, ingrown hairs or shaving irritation.**

**Fact:** In a recent Academy poll, 97 percent of men reported that they shave. Of those, 78 percent said that their skin gets irritated from shaving.

In men with a tendency toward razor bumps, ingrown hairs and similar problems, the hairs are often cut too short during shaving and may curl back into the skin rather than grow out. These ingrown hairs can cause pain, unsightly red or darkened bumps and, in severe cases, scarring.

“In order minimize shaving-related problems, there are four key points to shaving: get your beard thoroughly wet; shave in the direction that the hairs lie; avoid repeating strokes; and keep the skin relaxed while shaving,” Dr. Katz said. “For men who have severe shaving problems, laser hair removal may be an option.”

**Myth: Like it or not, tattoos are forever.**

**Fact:** A dermatologist can remove a patient’s tattoo using a laser with a minimum of downtime. Lasers remove tattoos by targeting the tattoo pigment in the skin and vaporizing it with a high-intensity light beam. Over the course of several treatments, the tattoo will fade and eventually be removed without scarring.

“While dark blue, red, some lighter blues and green ink respond well to laser treatment, the best candidate for tattoo removal is someone with a fair complexion and a black tattoo,” said Dr. Katz.

**Myth: Excess body hair is really hard to remove.**

**Fact:** While many men find that they start to grow excess body hair as they age, there are more ways to deal with it than ever before. Temporary hair removal techniques include tweezing, shaving, depilatories and waxing. For large areas, particularly the back and shoulders, these techniques may be too laborious and laser hair removal may be the best option.

Laser hair removal is becoming more popular with men who want permanent hair removal. Lasers work by targeting the pigment in the hair follicle and injuring it so that the hair falls out and cannot grow back. Depending on the size of the area treated, laser treatments may last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours.

“People with light skin and dark hair are the ideal candidates for laser hair removal,” Dr. Katz said. “But the use of new, longer wavelength lasers and skin cooling devices have increased the safety of lasers for people with darker skin types.”

**Myth: There is no cure for fungus.**

**Fact:** Most men experience jock itch, athlete’s foot or nail fungus at some point in their lives. Jock itch and athlete’s foot are caused by tinea fungus, which thrives in a warm, moist skin environment. Both conditions respond well to over-the-counter and prescription medications but can recur.

“It’s important to treat both jock itch and athlete’s foot immediately and to be careful about spreading the fungus from one area of the body to another by using the same damp towel,” Dr. Katz said. “You can avoid tinea by keeping the areas it targets dry and clean, wearing shower sandals in public bathing areas and wearing loose fitting clothing.”

Tinea fungus also can affect the nails, causing the end of the nail to separate from the nail bed, the skin on which the nail rests. Fungus also may build up

under the nail plate and discolor the nail bed. Toenails are more susceptible to fungal infections because they are confined in a warm, moist, weight-bearing environment.

"There are a variety of effective treatments for nail fungus and a dermatologist can help you find the best one for you," Dr. Katz said.

**Myth: Real men don't use sunscreen.**

**Fact:** According to the findings of a recent Academy poll, 65 percent of the men responded that they used sunscreen when outdoors, but only five percent used sunscreen daily.

"While it's great that most men know that it's important to use sunscreen when they are going to be outside, it would be even better if they used it daily," Dr. Katz said. "Not only does sunscreen protect against skin cancer, it's the No. 1 thing that men can do to prevent aging skin."

The consumer poll on skin-related health behaviors and attitudes was a Web-based poll fielded in September 2005 by the Segmentation Company, a Division of Yankelovich, Inc., in collaboration with the Academy. A total of 1,112 respondents age 18 and over responded to the poll.

Headquartered in Schaumburg, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy), founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 14,000 physicians worldwide, the Academy is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the Academy at 1-888-462-DERM (3376) or

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