How does hair removal affect my mole? [1]

Dear Alice,

Is it dangerous to wax or use a chemical depilatory such as Nair on areas of the skin that have moles? I've seen warnings on some labels regarding this. What could happen to the moles?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Though not necessarily dangerous, there are some factors to consider when finding your preferred mole-safe hair removal method. Moles are small areas of the skin that can be flat or slightly raised, and they’re made up of a higher concentration of pigmented cells than the surrounding skin. While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that people avoid waxing skin with moles, varicose veins, or warts, there are plenty of other options such as tweezing, trimming, and snipping to try instead.

Sporting a few moles doesn’t necessarily mean that you must forego hair removal via razor, laser, or chemical depilatories; the only caveat is that the skin and mole may get a bit irritated in the process. It’s possible for the skin around the mole to be slightly more sensitive which could lead to some discomfort after using certain methods. Occasionally, shaving and chemical hair removal products can cause scabbing over the mole, which, while it doesn’t inherently pose health risks, would make it harder to inspect the mole to see if it’s cancerous. It’s also a good idea when using depilatory chemicals to follow the instructions carefully and test out the product on a small patch of skin before using it on larger areas in case of allergies or irritation. If you want to avoid the risk of an angry mole altogether, you might choose less irritating ways of getting rid of the hair such as tweezing or trimming with a device such as a nose or ear hair trimmer.
Most people acquire moles throughout their lives. Though moles generally remain the same over time, if you notice any changes in the shape, color, or size of any moles, it can be worth getting checked by a health care provider, as any of these may be signs that a mole has become cancerous. To learn more, you can check out Mole = Melanoma? [2]. Luckily, although shaving, waxing, or applying chemicals may cause inflammation or irritation, these activities won’t increase the risk of cancer. Either way, it’s a good idea to keep an eye on your moles in general and visit a medical professional if you notice something unusual.

Alice!

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