

DERMASCOPE

The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics & Spa Therapy

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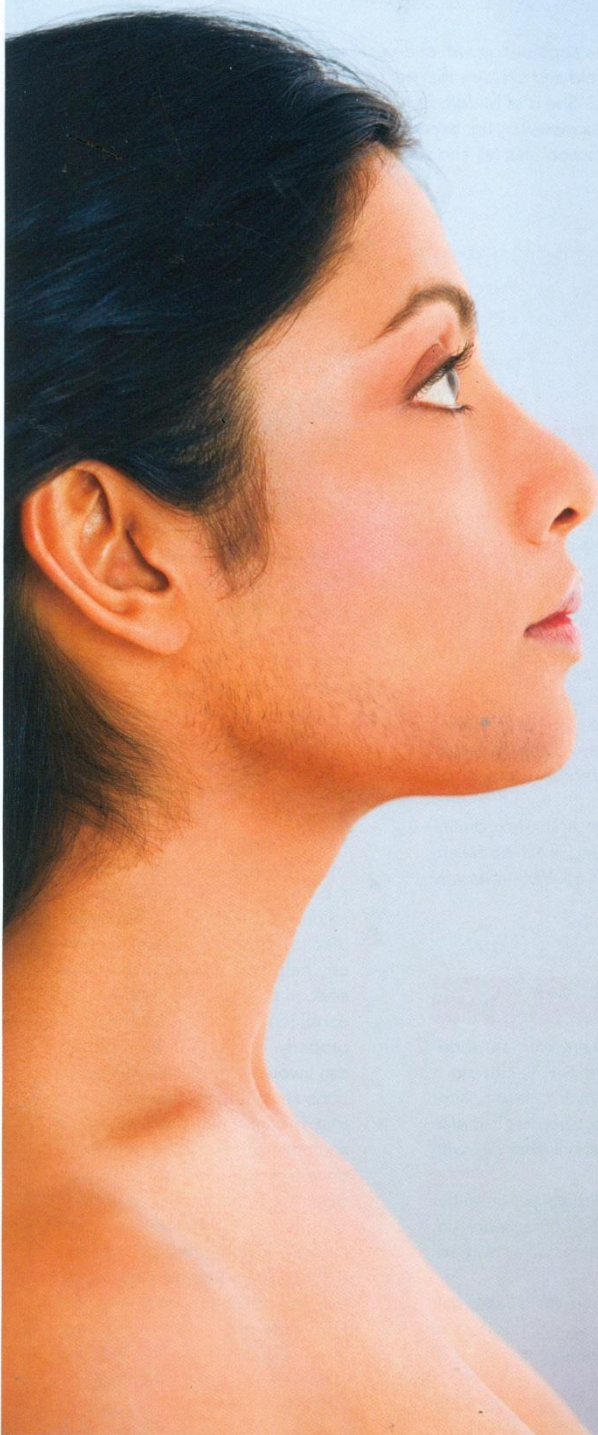
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Anti-Aging

Teen Skin

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Problem and *Solutions*



Problem: Hirsutism

Hirsutism is a condition in which women have excessive and unwanted male-pattern hair growth. It is a common disorder that affects approximately eight percent of women.¹ Women who suffer from hirsutism may experience extreme hair growth on various areas of the body including the face, neck, chest and abdominal region. Studies have shown that of women with apparent hirsutism typically 10 percent present hair on the chest, 22 percent present with hair on their chin, and 49 percent present with hair on the upper lip.

This excessive hair growth is often the result of a condition that is not life-threatening; however, it can signal a serious pathology and should be monitored by a physician if the hair growth is rapid or if it is accompanied by other male features such as acne, deepening voice, increased muscle mass, and decreased breast size.

Risk factors for hirsutism include family history and ancestry. Some of the conditions that cause hirsutism, such as congenital adrenal hyperplasia and polycystic ovary syndrome, have a tendency to run in families and women of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and South Asian ancestry. In these cases, the onset of the hirsutism is often apparent during puberty with gradual progression over the years following. The ethnic background, as well as distribution and density of hair growth, determine the degree of hirsutism. The age at onset, rate of growth and progression, and associated symptoms and signs can determine the severity of the problem.

Most of the time, the condition has no physical complications. In fact, the most devastating effects of the condition are often the psychological and emotional effects. Many women feel self-conscious about the presence of unwanted body hair and find it to be embarrassing and emotionally distressing.

Since the causes of the condition are typically benign, cosmetic treatment is often the only type of treatment that is required. In cases where medical treatment is employed, cosmetic treatment is often used in conjunction with the medical treatment because it is faster and, therefore, more effective in treating the emotional component of the condition.

Resources:

¹ Knochenhauer ES, Key TJ, Kahsar-Miller M, Waggoner W, Boots LR, Azziz R. Prevalence of the polycystic ovary syndrome in unselected black and white women of the southeastern United States: a prospective study. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab.* 1998;83:3078-82

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Case Study:

A new client comes to see you for a consultation. The apparent growth of excess hair on her face is troubling her and she is looking for treatment options. She is 17 years old and explains that her facial hair has been thickening and getting darker since she started puberty at the age of 12. She is of Middle Eastern heritage and shares that there is a family history of excessive hair growth. She is very embarrassed by her excess facial hair and says that the students at school tease her. She is going to be a senior in high school this fall and wants to eliminate her facial hair before she takes her senior photographs.

As a skin care professional, what solution would you propose to treat this case study on hirsutism?



Dr. Marina Peredo, associate clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York and founder of Spatique Medical Spa in Smithtown, N.Y.

"In a case like this, it is important to keep in mind that hirsutism can be embarrassing for women of any age, particularly a teenage girl, and it is difficult for one to even address their concerns with a professional.

During the consultation, put the client at ease by explaining that what she is experiencing is more common than she may realize and, more importantly, is treatable in time for her big moment. It is imperative to share all options of treatment including the benefits and possible set-backs of at-home treatments, so that she can feel in control and involved in the decision of her treatment plan.

I would recommend laser hair removal as her best option, as treatments like plucking, shaving and depilatories may cause irritation, folliculitis and hyperpigmentation. I would also recommend a consult with a dermatologist to discuss prescription topicals that slow the rate of hair growth significantly."