

nobody ever tells you about aging—and how to face them.

## The Hair on Your Face

Here's why you have more of it than you did when you were 20: hormones. Though a significant minority of women of all ages have coarse dark hair growing on their chin and upper lip because of a genetic predisposition, most women who have excess facial hair have an underlying hormonal issue, says Doris J. Day, MD, clinical assistant professor of dermatology at New York University Medical Center. As we age, our bodies lose estrogen; testosterone, unopposed, causes us to grow more hair where men have it, on our faces ([and to grow less on our heads](#)).

If you occasionally have several dark (or white) hairs on your lip or chin, it's fine to whack them off with a razor; plucking isn't the best option, because the force of the pluck can irritate and leave a bump, says Day. A couple of staffers here at *O* have female relatives who shave their faces; most dermatologists don't recommend this for several reasons, among them the fact that the down on your face feels soft because it's been there for a long time; shave it off, and it's going to grow back stiff or coarse (though no thicker than before). Laser hair removal works only in certain situations, says Loretta Ciraldo, MD, clinical professor of dermatology at the Miller School of Medicine at the University of Miami. It's not effective on white hair, and if your skin is olive or darker, laser can cause postinflammatory hyperpigmentation, which looks like a dark stain, so it could leave you with something like a mustache even though there's no hair on your lip. Electrolysis—a procedure in which the follicle is destroyed by heat through an electrical current—is a good solution for stray hairs, says Ciraldo, but it's not good for large areas. The prescription cream Vaniqa inhibits the enzyme that hair follicles need to grow. Ciraldo advises applying it twice a day at first; if the hair stops growing within three months, she then suggests application once a day, followed by every other day, to determine the minimum amount needed to prevent recurrence of growth. She says that most of her patients find that Vaniqa gets rid of all visible hairs.

Ciraldo also points out that she can't see the facial hair on 75 percent of the women who complain to her until she's within a few inches of their faces. She attributes their concern—and I'd say, considering personal experience, that she's right—to magnifying mirrors. In an unlucky confluence of events, just as our eyes start to go and we need a magnifier to apply makeup, we start getting more facial hair. So stand at arm's length in front of a regular mirror, she says. If you can't see the hair on your face, you don't need to do anything about it. (Gosh, I hope I'm right that you can't see the hair on my face from arm's length, but I get rid of it anyhow in case I want to encourage someone to come in for a close-up. That seems reasonable, doesn't it?)

Being downier can present an unattractive problem with makeup. "Peach fuzz on the face can 'grab' powder and foundation," says Maria Verel, celebrity makeup artist. There are a couple of tricks to prevent that. Apply foundation the way you apply moisturizer: Rub it in and let it set (or dry), says Verel. Then buff it off with a cloth or a clean, slightly damp sponge. If you also wear powder (or a powder foundation), after application, lightly mist your face with water to settle the powder. You can just let that be, or pat it dry.