



Ask Val

Questions about **caring for your eyebrows**? You've come to the right place. O's beauty director, **VALERIE MONROE**, gives you the straight story.

I may be the last 40-year-old eyebrow virgin. But recently I've been considering shaping my brows. I've even bought a pair of tweezers. How do I start?

Put down the tweezers. Shaping your own brows is a little like cutting your own hair: You may know what you want, but best to leave it to a professional. Ask someone whose eyebrows you admire where she has them done, then get a consultation. If you like the technician's ideas, let her do an initial shaping, which you can then maintain by tweezing strays between visits every six weeks or so.

I was going to have my brows waxed when someone suggested threading. Threading?

It's an ancient technique that involves pulling out hair with a knotted thread held between the technician's fingers and her teeth. I'd never seen it done till recently, at the Shobha salon in New York City. There I watched like a hawk the technician's quick, delicate movements—and I still can't tell you how she caught the hair in a perfect strip. The process looked less painful than waxing, and the results were beautiful.

I've been growing out my brows for two months now, and a couple of bare patches remain. Is there a way to speed up the growth process, and how can I look good till they've grown in?

Eyebrows grow more slowly than other body hair (for which we should probably be grateful), so be patient. But about those bare patches: Zealous plucking or waxing, which repeatedly traumatizes

follicles, may result in permanent hair loss, says Katie Rodan, MD, clinical associate professor of dermatology at Stanford University School of Medicine. Try topical 5 percent Rogaine Extra Strength, applied with a Q-tip to the areas where you want regrowth. If the follicles are still viable, you should see results in four to six months. Till then, fill in the gaps with brow gel or pencil (both adhere to the skin better than powder) one shade lighter than your hair color, and blend with an eyebrow brush, says Ramy Gafni, makeup artist and founder of Ramy Beauty Therapy cosmetics.

How can I avoid breaking out every time I have my brows waxed?

Three days before, skip the exfoliating cleansers, Retin-A, and products containing alpha hydroxy acids. And apply 1 percent hydrocortisone cream immediately after waxing and several times a day for one or two days following, says Rodan.

Is it my imagination, or are my eyebrows getting thinner as I get older?

I've found that past a certain age, you start to hear different kinds of complaints from your friends. Instead of "I have cramps," it's "Where did my eyebrows go?" (along with, sadly, "Where did my glasses, keys, shoes, car, kids go?"). Brows, like all body hair, do thin as we age, says Rodan. Though you can try Rogaine (see above), it's easy to fill in sparse brows with feathery strokes of a pencil or gel. •

THE BEST ARCH ACCESSORIES

1. Double duty: Anastasia Duo Brush, \$32, is good for both combing and filling. 2. If you've gotten carried away with the tweezers, try the thick, soft tip of Eliza Chunky Brow Filler, \$18, to quickly disguise gaps. 3. Smashbox Brow Tech, \$22, in four shades, includes silky powder to fill in color and pomade

to set. 4. The rounded edges of the Ramy Tweezer by Tweezerman, \$22, easily grab hair but won't nick delicate skin. 5. Hair gel for brows: Bobbi Brown Natural Brow Shaper, \$17. 6. Need precision filling? Try the superskinny MAC Eye Brows pencil, \$13.

For details see Shop Guide.



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