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SKIN SMART

Skin Care *Where?*

Does your bikini area really need its own regimen? We report. *By April Long*



a luxe paraben-, sulfate-, and fragrance-free skin-care line, was created by former L'Oréal Paris marketing executive Avonda Urben, who was inspired by the desire to elevate pampering of this delicate, deserving area. "Feminine care has been stuck in the 1950s, and it's all negative," she says. "You're bleeding, you're itching, you smell. It's all grouped in the back of the store, as if it's shameful. I didn't understand why we couldn't have a modern way to take care of ourselves." All the bikini-specific brands popping up are dermatologist and gynecologist tested to ensure efficacy and safety. This is the best argument for bikini-zone beautifiers, according to dermatologist Doris Day, M.D. "For those with sensitive skin in this area, it is helpful to know that the products have been tested," she says. "They're much less likely to cause a problem." Put simply, "Skin is skin. You really shouldn't neglect any of it," says dermatologist and *Shape* Brain Trust member Mona Gohara, M.D.

The V-zone is the new T-zone, with a raft of innovative brands offering everything from moisturizers to mists to—ready or not—highlighters, each promising to clean, hydrate, and beautify down below. While a multistep Korean-beauty-level regimen may be taking things too far, experts do say that we can all benefit from a little more love in the region. Here, simple maintenance for staying in good shape and holding undesirables such as ingrown hairs at bay.

A case for care

Most of the new products for the vaginal area are geared toward keeping the skin smooth and healthy overall. There's New York-based Fur (a chic line that softens pubic hair and is beloved by Emma Watson), Sweden's DeoDoc, and the Perfect V, to name a few. This last one,

Your basic routine

The key thing to understand is that the skin down there is different from the skin on your face because it has fewer sebaceous glands (those that produce oil). Still, it can benefit from a wash-exfoliate-moisturize regimen. Regular soap, though, should be a no-go in your vagina, since pH maintenance is paramount. Try an all-natural alternative, like the Vbar from Queen V (\$4, walmart.com), which is formulated to support the vagina's slightly acidic natural pH range of 3.8 to 4.5. It's also important to be mindful of potential irritants, such as fragrance. "Whenever a patient says she is itchy, red, or irritated in that area, the first thing I'll ask is, 'What kind of cleanser are you using?'" Dr. Gohara says. "Nine times out of 10 the problem is a sensitivity to perfumed cleansers."

If you're planning to shave your bikini area, you'll exfoliate next. Getting rid of dead-skin cells will help reduce the bumps and hyperpigmentation that shaving can cause, Dr. Gohara says. *(Continued on page 48)*

be waterproof



SCAN FOR SKIN-CARE MUST-HAVES
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Vaginal products have come a long way: The latest lineups look chic on your bathroom counter and feel luxurious.

The Perfect V Gentle Exfoliator (\$34, theperfectv.com) uses an alpha hydroxy acid buffered with jojoba oil. Then follow with a hydrating formula: DeoDoc Intimate Calming Oil (\$23, deodoc.com) soothes skin with chamomile, almond, and shea butter oil. For the more aesthetically inclined, there's also the Perfect V Very V Luminizer (\$43, theperfectv.com), a moisturizer with a radiance-boosting tint. (What's next, contouring?) "Make sure any oils and lotions you apply are absorbed before getting dressed, and avoid putting them on before a workout," says Dr. Gohara, who also cautions that your favorite spandex leggings might exacerbate irritation, especially with excess moisture. "Rubbing from tight clothes can leave inflamed follicles in the groin," she says. "When that happens, I recommend an over-the-counter benzoyl peroxide wash—used only externally—to settle things down."

The de-fuzzing

Hyperpigmentation and ingrown hairs, the two biggest bikini-line banes, are typically a result of hair removal. "Hair wasn't meant

to be removed, so it causes some trauma when we do it," Dr. Gohara says. "The skin reacts to shaving or waxing by inflating—each follicle creates a bubble to try to protect the hair." If you're prone to these issues and you shave, use "a simple one- or two-blade razor to minimize the risk of irritating the skin. Go with the grain of the hair, and use a shaving cream or an oil, not a bar soap, to help ease the hair out of the follicle," Dr. Gohara says. If you wax, "try using a benzoyl peroxide wash for a few days beforehand to decrease inflammation-causing bacteria in the area and a little over-the-counter cortisone right afterward to decrease redness and irritation," Dr. Day says. But if ingrown hairs are a major problem for you, know that waxing is probably the worst option. "It removes the hair from the follicle, and when it grows back, it can come in at an angle, leading to an ingrown," Dr. Day says. Opt for laser hair removal; at a doctor's office, you'll need about six treatments at \$300 each. Or try an at-home laser, like Tria Hair Removal Laser 4X, \$449, triabeauty.com. ■

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

Serious and/or immediate allergic reactions have been reported. They include: itching, rash, red itchy welts, wheezing, asthma symptoms, or dizziness or feeling faint. Get medical help right away if you are wheezing or have asthma symptoms, or if you become dizzy or faint.

Do not receive BOTOX® Cosmetic if you: are allergic to any of the ingredients in BOTOX® Cosmetic (see Medication Guide for ingredients); had an allergic reaction to any other botulinum toxin product such as Myobloc® (rimabotulinumtoxinB), Dysport® (abobotulinumtoxinA), or Xeomin® (incobotulinumtoxinA); have a skin infection at the planned injection site.

Tell your doctor about all your muscle or nerve conditions, such as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, myasthenia gravis, or Lambert-Eaton syndrome, as you may be at increased risk of serious side effects including difficulty swallowing and difficulty breathing from typical doses of BOTOX® Cosmetic.

Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including: plans to have surgery; had surgery on your face; have trouble raising your eyebrows; drooping eyelids; any other abnormal facial change; are pregnant or plan to become pregnant (it is not known if BOTOX® Cosmetic can harm your unborn baby); are breast-feeding or plan to (it is not known if BOTOX® Cosmetic passes into breast milk).

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Using BOTOX® Cosmetic with certain other medicines may cause serious side effects. **Do not start any new medicines until you have told your doctor that you have received BOTOX® Cosmetic in the past.**

Tell your doctor if you have received any other botulinum toxin product in the last 4 months; have received injection of botulinum toxin such as Myobloc®, Dysport®, or Xeomin® in the past (tell your doctor exactly which product you received); have recently received an antibiotic by injection; take muscle relaxants; take an allergy or cold medicine; take a sleep medicine; take aspirin-like products or blood thinners.

Other side effects of BOTOX® Cosmetic include: dry mouth; discomfort or pain at the injection site; tiredness; headache; neck pain; and eye problems: double vision, blurred vision, decreased eyesight, drooping eyelids and eyebrows, swelling of your eyelids, and dry eyes.

For more information refer to the Medication Guide or talk with your doctor.

To report a side effect, please call Allergan at 1-800-678-1605.

Please see Summary of Important Information about BOTOX® Cosmetic on next page.