# **Shaving pubic hair linked to increased STI risk, study says**

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You may want to reconsider shaving the hair "down there."

Shaving or waxing the hair down there may feel like the hygienic thing to do, but a new study suggests that those who regularly remove their pubic hair could be at greater risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection, according to the journal [Sexually Transmitted Infections.](http://sti.bmj.com/content/early/2016/10/31/sextrans-2016-052687.full#T2)

The study, published Monday, surveyed 7,580 U.S. residents from ages 18-65 about their grooming habits, past sexual behavior and STI history. A positive correlation was identified between those who frequently remove their pubic hair and the presence of sexually transmitted infections such as herpes, HPV and syphilis.

High-maintenance groomers were categorized in the study as “high-frequency” groomers and “extreme” groomers. “High-frequency” groomers were defined as those who perform daily or weekly pubic hair trimming, while “extreme” groomers were defined as anyone who removed all of their pubic hair more than 11 times each year.

Those two categories were prone to overlap, as an “extreme” groomer could also be a “high frequency” groomer if they trimmed their hair regularly in addition to completely removing it.

Seventy-four percent of the study’s participants reported grooming their pubic hair in the past. The majority of “high-frequency” and “extreme” groomers were younger and female, the study found. As a whole, groomers reported a higher number of sexual partners and sexual activity.

According to [the study](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/12/07/why-you-might-want-think-twice-before-shaving-your-pubic-hair/95081856/), extreme groomers were nearly four times more likely to have an STI than non-groomers. But although “extreme groomers” and “high-frequency groomers” were more likely to report a history of certain STIs, pubic lice was more common among non-extreme and low-frequency groomers, the study said.

Correlation doesn’t imply causation, so the findings of the study don’t prove that shaving or waxing pubic hair will definitely cause someone to contract an STI. However, the study’s authors say cuts and tears that occur as a result of shaving/waxing could increase the likelihood of an STI entering the system.

The study’s authors believe this is the first study that has examined the possible relation between STIs and grooming practices.