**BACK, SACK AND CLAP**

# **Waxing or shaving down below ‘increases YOUR risk of STIs by 440%’**

Grooming may cause tears and cuts to the skin, increasing the risk of a picking up an infection down below

BY NICK MCDERMOTT, HEALTH EDITOR

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BRITS who keep it bare down below are four times more likely to catch a sexually transmitted infection, a study reveals.

It found adults who removed all their pubic hair were at a 440 per cent higher risk of picking up a sex bug. Experts said younger people are most likely to banish the bush.

Researchers said those waxing or trimming below were more sexually active, putting them at greater risk of STIs.

And grooming may also cause small cuts and tears to the skin, making it easier to pick up an infection.

The study looked at more than 7,500 adults in the U.S. aged between 18 and 65.

Around 13 per cent admitted having at least one STI.

Three-quarters said they trimmed their pubes – with 84 per cent of women and 64 per cent of blokes’ saying they were fans of a manicured bush.

Scientists found those practising “extreme” grooming – the removal of all their pubic hair – were at the highest risk of infections such as chlamydia, syphilis, warts and gonorrhoea.

But overall, any cutting, waxing or shaving down below was linked to an 80 per cent higher chance of an STI.

Writing in the journal Sexually Transmitted Infections, lead researcher Dr Benjamin Breyer from the University of California San Francisco, said: “Grooming may cause epidermal [skin] microtears, which may increase the risk of STIs.

“Another possible explanation for our findings, individuals who groom may be more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours than those who do not groom.”

The most common grooming tool for ladies was a simple razor, while for blokes it was an electric shaver.

Dr Peter Greenhouse, a spokesman for the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV, said only one in five Brits are aware they have an STI.

He said: “Many younger people are following trends they have seen in pornography. But of all the habits picked up from watching adult films online, removal of pubic hair is the least harmful.

“It could be the case that people who look after the appearance of their genitalia are also more likely to get tested for infections.

“Being bare down below would also make it easier to spot any warts or rashes.

“It is simply a reflection of modern sexual activity that those using dating apps are more likely to be concerned about their appearance, and follow the trend for genital shaving.

“And the biggest risk factor for STIs is the amount of sexual activity you have.”