

Muff

Makeover

Wax, shave, bleach, dye...there are heaps of cool things you can do to your pubes, as VIRGINIA MUZIK discovered.

Marilyn Monroe decided to bleach hers with peroxide after a stay in hospital revealed she wasn't a natural blonde. Sixties style leader Mary Quant used to shave hers into a heart shape. Nineties supermodels wax theirs into narrow mohawks or whip it off completely. Yep, it's muff styling and it'll *always* be in fashion.

For most of us, shaving or waxing our bikini line is second nature, but for an increasing number of women it's not enough to just get rid of "superfluous" hair — they want to wear what's left with pride. And with more women indulging in navel and genital piercing, there's all the more reason to keep the ol' nether regions trimmed and groomed (well, do you wear your hair over your ears when you're sporting a gorgeous pair of earrings?).

Hair acts as protection and insulation for the sensitive areas of our bodies —

the thicker the hair growth, the more sensitive the area. Density, growth patterns, texture and colour all depend on individual genetic makeup — it's hormonally-driven and those wiry, curly body hair follicles are (thankfully) quite different from those on your head.

In case you've ever wondered, pubic hair serves two specific purposes. It traps the sexual aromas released by the vagina and cushions the area during intercourse. It's functional as well as coiffable and, as one woman put it, "it keeps the nest warm".

So what sort of woman chooses to style her muff? Beautician Jean Paul Tayo, formerly of The Bee's Knees (a Sydney salon specialising in full bikini waxing and designs), says the women he sees are confident and comfortable with their sexuality.

"Women who take that extra step forward and indulge in something like a full bikini wax, a pattern, or even genital piercing, are making a statement about

Sara, in her early twenties, is a Mistress. She clips her muff to show off her genital piercings.

"I shave it with a clipper on a number one setting, so it's a soft down. I let it grow slightly down my legs and I like to keep a little bit around my piercings because it gives an interesting sensation. Outside the main pubic bone, I keep it shapely. If I'm in the mood, I'll take it all off or make a dent at the top so it's like a bowl.

"My playmates like it and the area is a lot more sensitive, there's a feeling of cleanliness. I like the feeling of leather on my flesh and hair will generally interfere with that. And I like to show my muff now. I prefer showing it when it's clean-shaven, but y'know, I'll take my clothes off anytime!"

Delirious, 23,

is a makeup artist. Her pubes are shaped into an orange mohawk. "I just do it to match my hair so I can say that it's natural. I think it's a logical thing to do, if you're going to decorate the rest of your body with colours and styles. I think it's funny that everyone else doesn't! My girlfriend likes it, so that's a bonus. She's got a cat's head shape in hers."



Audrey, 31,

is a chartered accountant and removes her pubes completely. "I did it to please my boyfriend. Having got used to it, it's quite good under clothes — not having the bushy effect. I might not always keep it totally shaved, but I'll always have it heavily trimmed. The fact I'm very comfortable with my sexuality means shaving my muff off is not a big deal. Everything's really visible when you shave."

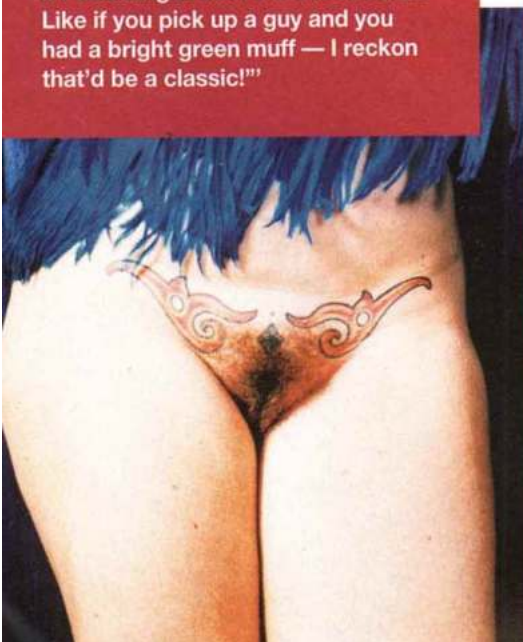


Amanda, 31,

is in advertising. She wears her muff highly waxed on the sides. "I like wearing G-strings and I want it to look neat. My boyfriend really likes it — he's always ruffling it up and he calls it a 'little rascal'. He said he'd be devastated if it all went. If it turns him on, then it turns me on. "I'm not embarrassed by it, but I would be if I had my normal hair there, because it can be very bushy. I feel sexier and it's easier for when a guy goes down on you. If I was hairy, I'd be inhibited. "I'd be more likely to dye my muff if I was single. Just the shock value. Like if you pick up a guy and you had a bright green muff — I reckon that'd be a classic!"

Robin, 25, is an S&M performer. She styles her muff regularly.

"At the moment I trim it with a beard trimmer on grade 0, so it appears shaved but you get none of that nasty rash. I did grow a tuft recently, but it was too much effort to maintain it, so it's gone. I think it looks clean and neat now — it shows off my gorgeous pussy and the piercing I have on my clitoral hood. "Even though I have one partner who'd prefer me to have a huge hairy bush, I don't like the look of it. The partner I see mainly absolutely loves it. It was under his request that I grew the tuft — he wanted to see what it looked like. "I always find it amusing when you meet a guy who's never seen (shaved pubes) except in a magazine, and they just go mad over it. It makes you look like a young girl, you actually see what your pussy looks like. It's nice when you masturbate, it's nice when you fuck. It's much nicer for someone to go down on you — you get a lot more oral sex. "I used to do shapes and dye it. You're walking around and you've got purple pubic hair shaped into a diamond and no one can see! If I was less lazy, I'd have extensions, bells hanging off it, I'd have all sorts of things!"



themselves. They're searching for some sort of empowerment. And I guess they're using it as some sort of toy and bringing it into a sexual relationship."

Consulting clinical psychologist Norman Rees adds that in a lot of cases it's the expectations of a woman's partner that determines how she wears her muff. "I think women mainly do it because they're encouraged. There are some women that might be influenced by their partner because their partner feels that it looks better a certain way. In some cases it represents a certain narcissism in the person...they might see themselves as a very sexual sort of person." You betcha!

The thrill of the trim

Although many different types of women choose to part with their pubes, women with pierced genitals are more likely to trim or shave for reasons of hygiene and to show off their piercings. Kristi Turner from Sydney's The Piercing Urge sees muff styling as a kind of covert exhibitionism, reflecting a woman's enjoyment of her own sexuality.

"The more likely a woman is to style her pubic hair in some way, the more proud she obviously is and the more likely she is to feel she could show it off in public. Like when you're wearing sexy lingerie — it makes you feel better, even though no one else can see it," she says.

Jean Paul Tayo agrees that muff styling can enhance a woman's enjoyment of her sexuality. "It's something you do for yourself. It makes your genitalia look more attractive, therefore you feel more sexually pleasing to yourself and your partner. A woman must be incredibly empowered by it and excited, thrilled with the way it looks. The sensation is quite extraordinary."

Then there are women who style their muffs for professional reasons. According to wigmaker Sharon Geyer, some women in the sex industry style their pubic hair for their clients, even shaving it off



A razor's still your best bet when styling.

Make it easy by clipping excess hair.

Home Styling

Leave the dye job to the professionals.

Lather up for a closer pube shave.

Only wax around the edges.

If you can't face baring your bush to a total stranger, you can give your muff a makeover at home. Here are some home styling tips:

- ✂ Wax is great for larger areas but a razor may be easier to wield — be sure to use shaving cream and shave in the direction of the hair growth.
- ✂ Be clear about what you want — deciding that a love heart would be better as a hand may be disastrous when you've already removed half your pubes. If you're a novice, choose simple designs.
- ✂ Take it slowly and make use of your partner as a sexy assistant.
- ✂ For a precision shave, clip away excess hair then trace your design onto the skin, using a template and a soft-tip pen.
- ✂ Make sure you use heaps of aloe, tea tree oil or moisturiser afterwards.
- ✂ Don't experiment with dyes at home — they can be dangerous and are best left to the professionals.

completely and wearing a merkin (pubic hair wig) that they can change to suit a client's particular desire.

This practice dates back to the seventeenth century when a merkin was worn more to disguise the shaved pubic regions of women being treated for venereal diseases, rather than as a sexual accessory. ("Merkin" is actually French: mere for mother, and kin, a diminutive.) During World War II the merkin resurfaced when some dark-haired European ladies of pleasure — in addition to bleaching their pubic hair — wore the merkin for soldier clients who preferred their bed partners to be blonde "down there".

In the twentieth century, some models or actresses may resort to the merkin for nude photo shoots. Made on a gauze backing with human hair and applied with a spirit gum to the skin, the merkin's much like a stick-on moustache for your mound!

While some women get a thrill from trimming and shaving, it seems the majority lose their fur for their partner, or because friends have done it. Muff styling also seems to be more popular within the lesbian community.

"The dykes we see through work are more likely to have styled muffs, at least trimmed and waxed on the sides," says Kristi Turner. "It depends on the type of dyke as well. There's the more Mother Earth type who probably wouldn't do anything, but dykes from Sydney's Newtown or Oxford Street are more fashion-conscious."

Another body piercer reckons muff style preference has more to do with the type of sex you're into. "A lot of female submissives tend to shave their pubic hair as a sign of submission or openness if they're into S&M and B&D. A lot of straight men are into shaved pussies."

The hot designs

The most popular shape for muffs, apart from the many variations of the traditional triangle, is the love heart. This usually involves waxing between the legs, leaving a heart-shaped tuft on the mound. Lightning bolt designs are also popular and work best with a "full head" of pubic hair to fit the whole strike of the bolt across.

As with hair-on-your-head styles, a pubic hairstyle requires maintenance. The hair needs to be trimmed regularly to help the style hold its shape, colour needs to be retouched and, of course, ingrown hairs can be a problem. Many women change muff styles rather than worry about maintaining the same one, and the majority shift between having a bald pussy to sporting a small tuft of hair on their mound. When mood and time allows, different shapes or colours come into play.

And there are a lot of imaginative women out there. Jean Paul Tayo remembers a woman who dyed her muff and underarm hair fluorescent purple, and a client who uses a biscuit cutter as a stencil for her designs — just think bunnies, gingerbread men, trucks, trains and stars! Some women have sported green muffs with "keep off the grass" shaved into them.

Whether a woman decides to style her muff for herself or for her partner, one thing's for sure — pube grooming highlights and enhances one area of our bodies that makes us the beautiful, sexual creatures we are. And that can only be a good thing.