

Shaving and Other Hazards Of Men

By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB

As promised in my last two columns, I will now address the role of cartilage and its function in our body.

But first, how many of you guys out there got an early Christmas present in the mail recently?

I don't mean the pre-approved credit card that promises you untold benefits at no risk for the first thirty days.

How do we get on these mailing lists?

I'm talking about a complementary razor that was sent out to a "select few" men.

I don't know how you felt but when I opened the box I found what appeared to be the weapon of mass destruction that people were looking for in Iraq a few years ago.

I mean this thing was HUGE, to quote a word used in an obnoxious car commercial. And it has no less than FIVE, count them, FIVE blades. This thing is one heavy instrument.

I felt obligated to buy a gun cabinet and lock it up lest it fall in the hands of some criminal.

Just for comparison I checked my present razor and found that it has only two blades. I never noticed that. I thought it only had one.

My particular brand of razor has been taking care of my shaving needs for quite some time. And the reason I have stuck with it is because I can buy a pack of ten when it's on sale, and with a coupon that the store doubles. Total cost is approximately \$4.00. But I save more when they occasionally offer packs of 12 for the same price as 10. That means it only costs me 33 cents for each razor.

Now a razor lasts me a whole week. So that amounts to about 5 cents a shave. You math majors can check my figures for accuracy. Round it up or down for accuracy.

And the way I figure, shaving cream costs me a cent and a half a day or 10 cents a week. I know the exact cost because I put the starting date on a piece of masking tape and place it on a new can every time I begin using it. A can usually lasts 9 months. That's 270 days or shaves. I buy it, once again, when it's on sale and with a coupon that's doubled. And I get the "33% more" can as well.

Call me cheap if you will, but I like to get my money's worth whenever possible.

When I buy items in the bulk section of the grocery store I weight them **before** I attach the twist tie. No sense paying for that thing. I also weigh the item without the plastic bag whenever feasible (peanuts in the shell are tough to keep on the scale without a bag)

But, enough of this nonsense. Back to the topic at hand- shaving. I figure this 3-minute daily shaving routine costs me about 5 ½ cents a day.

I found out the price of this WMD that I received in the mail. It retails for \$9.45 in its entirety. Replacement blades (remember there's five) are \$23.59 for a pack of 8 or \$2.95 each.

You can check my math again, but I figure I need to get 65 shaves out of these five-bladers just to equal the efficiency of my two-blader.

I decided to use this new gift to test my theory. It lasted just 16 shaves before it lost its "cutting edge".

So much for the efficiency of modern technology!

Now you may be asking what does this have to do with the topic of this page- not an uncommon question posed about this column.

As my avid reader(s) know(s) I usually get around to relevance about now. So here's the tie in.

The shaving process creates hundreds of micro-cuts that produce sensitivity in a man's face or a woman's legs (this is not a sexist column). Although women can hide their legs when necessary, men don't have that option with respect to their face

As far as a man's face goes, what you see is what you see, unless he's a professional clown or a two-faced politician.

Shaving also creates friction on the surface of the skin that can lead to further irritation.

When the skin is dehydrated, a condition that is common in most men (due to the application of shaving soaps and lotions high in alcohol content), the hair, or beard, is unable to protrude through the skin's surface.

As the hair attempts to exit, and is obstructed by the dehydrated surface, it finds an alternative route and begins to grow inward, creating an extremely common condition known as folliculitis or "ingrown hair". This can at times lead to a great deal of discomfort and even infection.

An alternative is to let your beard grow. Many of our historical figures grew beards. Abraham Lincoln, one of our most famous presidents, grew a beard. But he didn't do that to avoid the conditions described above.

He actually grew a beard upon the recommendation of a young girl who lived in Westfield, New York, just northwest of my hometown of Jamestown.

In 1860, two weeks before Lincoln was elected president he received a letter from an 11-year old girl by the name of Grace Bedell. She suggested that he grow a beard because he looked so gaunt and sickly without one. She thought it would enhance his appearance and help him win the election.

Well he followed her recommendation and, after elected as president, Lincoln later visited Westfield to seek her out and thank her.

There's your dose of history in this multi-faceted column. And as Paul Harvey would say, now you know the REST of the story.

Anyway, with the winter approaching we are also faced with a season of dry skin and chapped lips.

I know that in winter months I often experience cracked fingers from washing dishes too much in hot water. We have a dish washer, but some dishes need to be prepped before going into the machine just like you car does before going through the car wash.

In addition to cracked fingers I experience dry skin in my lower back and in my feet when showering.

A solution to these problems is to use lukewarm water when bathing yourself or your dishes. Also, limiting your baths and showers to 4-5 minutes helps. My showers don't last too long. I just get in, do what I have to and get out. I consider that a man's trait.

Another helpful hint would be to use moisturizing agents that trap much needed moisture in your skin.

You can also add moisture to your air with humidifiers.

Another thing you can do is break the lip-licking cycle in response to dry lips.

Because after you lick your lips moisture evaporates quickly leaving your lips drier than before. Personally that's not one of my habits.

And as a final suggestion, keep your body hydrated by drinking ample amounts of water each day.

You can avoid the unpleasant conditions facing you during the upcoming winter months by taking some of the precautions suggested above.

More about the role of cartilage in our body in the next column (or maybe the one after that).

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