

**BYRDIE**

# **Hot vs. Cold Waxing: The Real Difference Between These Hair-Removal Methods**

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**A**fter taking a quick poll of people close to me (by that I don't mean people I'm emotionally connected to, but people who are literally seated in my vicinity at a nearby coffee shop), it seems that most don't believe there's much difference—if any at all—between hot and cold waxing. I know my ways aren't entirely scientific, but from a beauty writer's perspective, they seem accurate. After all, waxing is simply pulling hair from the follicle, so why does it matter whether said wax is warm or room temperature when it's being used? It's accomplishing the same end result, right? Well, according to experts, it does matter. And it might matter a whole lot. Depending on the kind of wax you're using to remove body hair, you should be expecting different levels of difficulty—even different results. That's not even to mention how each type of wax could be affecting your skin.

### **What's the Difference?**

"Hot wax uses melted wax. The wax is applied while still warm and spread evenly onto the skin," explains Jeanette Haylock, education manager at [Brazils Waxing Center](#). "If it is a soft hot wax, a strip is then laid and pressed on top of the wax. Hard hot wax hardens in place as the wax cools (no strip needed). The wax then molds onto the skin and grips at each individual hair strand. Whether soft or hard hot wax, it is then pulled out quickly, in the opposite direction of the hair growth." So if you've ever booked a waxing appointment, then it's likely hot wax was used. It's warm to the touch and manually spread out on the skin.

As for cold wax, it "works in a similar way, except it can be pre-measured, applied at lukewarm temperature or doesn't require a heat source (except for the rubbing of your hands), and can sometimes come prepared on a strip," says Shobha Tummala, founder of [Shobha hair removal salons](#). If you wax at home, let's say with a product like [Sally Hanse Hair Remover Wax Strip Kit](#) (\$5), then you're using cold wax since it doesn't require an outside heat source and it's already spread out evenly on thin strips.



## What Are the Benefits of Cold Wax?

According to Tummala, the benefits of cold wax include better portability for traveling (because who's going to bring a wax melter and strips with them on vacation?). It's also generally less messy than hot wax since it comes pre-spread for your convenience. Edyta Jarosz, lead aesthetician at [PFrankMD Skin Salon](#) and global brand ambassador for [MDNA Skin](#), agrees. "With ready-to-use strips, cold wax needs minimal preparation and can be used anywhere," she says. "You can even take it with you when traveling. In hot waxing, one has to manually apply the wax with the stick and then remove it using paper strips. Because of the mess and skill required in using hot wax, it is best left to the experts."

What's more, "you run the risk of getting wax burns with hot wax when opting for hot wax at some salons or by inexperienced specialists," Tummala explains. While this is avoidable by booking an appointment with a reputable salon, cold wax eliminates the possibility entirely. Just don't think that cold wax is without its downsides. Jarosz says the potential for skin irritation is high. **"Cold wax strips have to be applied over the same area multiple times to achieve the same result,"** Jarosz says. "When anyone receives a wax, the top layer of our epidermis gets naturally exfoliated during the waxing process. If you wax over an area multiple times, this can cause more skin to lift and exfoliate excessively. When this happens, you will feel and look like you got burned because you did."

## What Are the Benefits of Hot Wax?

Hot wax, on the other hand, is better in regard to precision. Because you or a professional has full control of the wax, you can shape it and spread it exactly how it needs to be to achieve the best results. Plus, according to Tummala, hot wax is better at removing shorter hair. "Hot wax adheres to the hairs stronger and more firmly than cold wax, which makes it more effective for removing shorter or finer hairs from the root." So if you don't want to wait as long in between waxing sessions, then hot wax might be for the best option for you.



## What's the Verdict?

Generally speaking, hot wax is the way to go, since it's "able to spread more evenly than cold wax and firmly grips hairs pulling them from the root, giving clean and smoother results," says Tummala. "Cold wax often leaves hairs behind requiring repeated waxing over those areas." Haylock agrees, saying that "hot wax is significantly more effective than cold wax. As the hot wax cools, it grips around the hair tighter and removes more hair out in one pull." This, as we know from Jarosz, is important because if you're re-waxing the same area, it can result in red, irritated, and damaged skin, which is why hot wax can be safer and more effective for skin if you have coarse hair that requires multiple cold wax sheets to remove.

In general, though, weigh benefits of each and decide which type of wax works best for you and your lifestyle. **While the experts say hot wax is generally more effective, there's nothing wrong with using cold wax sheets if you prefer those. Just like with all things beauty, use whatever makes you feel most comfortable.** Also, be sure to treat skin both pre- and post-wax. This can save from irritation and ingrown hairs "Prepping your skin before a wax is crucial to the overall outcome," Haylock says. "A deep cleanser with pH balancing qualities keeps your pores and hair follicles unclogged and free of debris. Also chemically exfoliating your skin is an essential part of pre- and post-wax skincare. An all-natural chemical exfoliant (like a glycolic acid) penetrates deep into the skin and kills bacteria, sebum, and buildup on and in the pores and follicles. These products also aid in the reduction of ingrown hairs and skin discoloration as well." She highly recommends [Elate Skin Care](#), which produces quality vegan and cruelty-free skincare products.

Tummala agrees that exfoliation is key to caring for your skin post-wax. "After waxing appointments, we highly recommend exfoliating daily, cleansing your skin using your Shobha [Exfoliating Cloth](#) (\$15)," she says. "Use it daily with your favorite body wash or soap for smoother, softer skin, preventing the buildup of dead skin that can trap hairs. If you have existing bumps and ingrown hairs, add a topical treatment to your routine, like Shobha [Ingrown Relief Lotion](#) (\$22). These products should be used consistently to see the best results. Over time, they can be used to prevent and treat ingrown hairs. For prevention and mild ingrowns, apply daily at night. For more severe ingrown cases, use twice daily, at night, and in the morning. For the best results, apply after showering while the skin is still moist to ensure optimal absorption of the lotion by the skin."