

The Naked Truth

Despite recent controversies, clients still request Brazilian waxing services. **Here's how you can guarantee their safety.**

By Sarah Colombo and Allison Rost

AS THE FOUNDER OF BRAZILIAN BOOT CAMP

(www.brazilianwaxbootcamp.com), Tina Zillmann knows something about the popularity of the trendy waxing service. She teaches estheticians around the country how to remove hair in intimate areas—front and back—as painlessly and safely as possible. Her services have been in growing demand over the past few years as spas try to keep up with clients' requests.

Even so, Zillmann is still surprised by the lengths to which clients go for fashionably hairless bikini lines. "We're located near several high schools," says the vice president and educator with Advanced Rejuvenating Concepts in Schertz, Texas, and president of Aesthetics International Association (www.aiaprofessional.com). "A girl who looked older than she was lied about her age and asked for a Brazilian wax. The tech performed it, but the girl went home and said, 'Mom, look what they did to me!'"

With the removal of pubic hair gaining so many fans, a client's age is just one factor spa professionals need to consider when performing this complicated service. In fact, the New Jersey State Board of Cosmetology and Hairstyling recently debated the legality of Brazilian waxing when two women reported developing infections after their appointments. Thanks to the lobbying efforts of a number of spa owners and industry experts (see Legal Pad, page 36), the service is still permitted in the Garden State. However, the resulting media attention from the threatened ban forced many consumers—and day spa owners—to question its safety.

Despite the negative attention, Brazilian waxing remains a safe, sanitary procedure. Adding it to your menu—and promoting it as a cheaper and less painful alternative to laser hair removal—can boost your bottom line. In a recent survey of almost 600 DAYSPA readers, 79% of respondents indicated that they offer waxing services, and 18% of that group said they were among their spa's most profitable. Even during the current recession, day spa owners report that clients wait longer between services, but they're not dropping their Brazilians altogether. "It picks up in the summer, but clients who are diligent about keeping it up book the service throughout the year," says Mary Velek, owner of Spa Villa Salon & Day Spa (www.spavillasalon.com) in Santa Clarita, California.

DAYSPA recently enlisted the help of prominent industry experts to outline the proper guidelines for this procedure. Brush up on your waxing wisdom to increase professionalism and profitability.





1 Stay safe.

Before you begin offering Brazilian waxing, verify that your spa's insurance policy covers it. Then, check your state's regulations on pubic and genital hair removal. The rules vary on who can perform these services, according to Michael L. Antoline, J.D., DAYSPA advisory board member and industry legal expert. For example, the licenses issued to estheticians, cosmetologists and nail techs permit different practices. "Ignorance is no excuse," he says. "Every spa owner is charged with knowing and understanding the laws." (For state board contact information, visit www.dayspamagazine.com.)

Once you've been cleared to offer the service, safety should be your first priority. Stock your waxing room with the following staples: gauze, cotton pads, unopened sterilization pads, disposable

applicators and removal strips, and sterilized tweezers, scissors and trimmers. Cover your treatment table with a new sheet of paper or other disposable wrap before each service. Disinfect your hands with a proper solution and wear throwaway, medical-grade gloves for the duration of the procedure. Offer the client a disinfecting wipe before you begin.

Many waxing experts recommend that clients wear disposable thong panties. It affirms the spa's commitment to safe practices, according to Rosemary Weiner. "It establishes trust and indicates that the service provider will proceed with professionalism," says the advisory board chair of the Day Spa Association (www.dayspaassociation.com).

Cleanse the area before waxing begins. Determine that there are no open wounds, rashes, pimples, infections, blisters or other irritation that could cause cross-contamination. Explain that moles or piercings can't be waxed because removal might occur.

Beyond these guidelines, one of the most important ways to conduct a safe Brazilian waxing is to avoid double-dipping. This unsanitary practice involves repeated contact between an applicator, wax and a client's skin. "The wax isn't maintained at a temperature where it can kill bacteria," Weiner explains. "Discarding applicators after each use is your primary defense against the spread of infection."

It may also become an issue if you break the skin, which can host organisms such as *Staphylococcus aureus*. "It's our barrier," Weiner says. "If you see a cut, you should never wax over it." In fact, if a waxing mishap causes bleeding, stop the service



Fast Facts

Here's some background on the Brazilian:

- Seven sisters brought the traditional *depilação* to New York City from their native Brazil in 1987. Their facility, J. Sisters International Salon and Spa (www.jsisters.com), still serves clients in Manhattan.
- Brazilian waxing removes every trace of a woman's pubic hair from the bikini area, around the anus and on the pubis—including the outer labia.
- For men, it includes the scrotum, penis, anus, pubis and sometimes the buttocks. The service came about due to the small swimsuit bottoms Brazilian beach-goers wear.
- Other names for Brazilian waxing and its variations include the Sphinx, the Hollywood, the Full Monty, the Playboy and the European.
- Named for a style of thong, the French bikini wax leaves a long, narrow patch of hair on the client's pubis, which is sometimes called a landing strip.
- An American bikini wax removes hair at the top of the thighs and under the navel—anything that's visible when wearing a regular bikini bottom.





EASE DISCOMFORT:
Test the temperature
of the wax before
applying it.

immediately. (Some spots of blood may naturally appear on the skin as hair follicles are pulled out; cleanse and continue as appropriate.) Many estheticians use sprayable hydrogen peroxide and liquid solutions to disinfect and treat slight injuries.

"If tears or burns occur, immediately determine whether the client requires medical attention," Zillmann says. "Place antibacterial ointment on an injury to keep it clean until she can see a doctor."

2 Comfort the client.

Sanitation may reassure your guests, but all the cleanliness procedures in the world won't ease their pain. Still, you can help take away some of the sting—emotional and physical.

Respecting a client's privacy is one way to do it. When guiding a guest through a Brazilian, give her space to disrobe and cleanse herself before and after the service. "Draping is still as important as it is in massage to maintain some decorum and modesty," says DAYSPA advisory board member Frank Shipman, who owns TC Salon Spas (www.tcsalonspa.com) in Bethlehem and Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Your attitude also makes a big difference, according to Lori Nestore. "Imagine if a gynecologist said, 'I'm sorry, I know this is embarrassing,'" says the CEO of Eva's Esthetics (www.evasesthetics.com). "Make eye contact with your client when you're chatting. It's nicer for her."

Another way to relax a spa-goer is to instruct her to use her hands (gloved) to pull the skin taut around the area being waxed. "The pressure helps calm nerve endings," Shipman says. "It prevents the skin from bruising and the hair follicle from breaking." After you remove the strip, immediately apply your own hand to the freshly waxed area for a moment to soothe the nerves.

Plus, discuss which areas are most sensitive—such as the triangle just above the crotch. "Explain what she'll be feeling so she won't be shocked," says Valentina Chistova, owner of Aquamedica Salon and Day Spa (www.aquamedicaspa.com) in Long Branch, New Jersey. "I tell the client that we'll work as a team. She has her part to do, and I have mine."

To reduce physical pain, consider simple precautions before you start the service. Test the temperature of the wax on the inside of your wrist

Hard vs. Soft

Estheticians choose between two types of waxes for Brazilians. Here are the differences:

Hard wax. "This is used without strips," says Sally Ferguson, marketing communications specialist for Spilo Worldwide (spilo.com). "It's good on coarse or hard-to-remove hair, which is what you want with Brazilians." Solid at room temperature, it has a lower melting point and requires a thicker application. "It's gentler when you pull on it. We use hard wax where the skin starts to get moist because it doesn't tug or stick to anything," says Tina Zillmann, founder of Brazilian Boot Camp (www.brazilianwaxbootcamp.com).

Soft wax. This variety requires a strip for removal and works better on larger areas of the body. "We use it on the outside of the leg and on top of the bikini area," Zillmann says. It also requires more heat than hard wax does. "The application process is the main difference between the two," Ferguson says. Soft wax also has a more liquid consistency.

or with a thermometer before you apply it to the client's skin. This helps prevent abrasions and burns. Due to the various possible reactions to heat, Chistova suggests placing a small spot on a client's outer bikini area to check skin sensitivity.

Soothing agents in some waxes buffer and protect skin affected by Brazilian services. Vitamin E, for example, is an anti-inflammatory, and tea tree oil acts as an antiseptic. Shipman recommends waxes that contain soothing azulene for a gentler experience. Velek says that her three estheticians find that honey waxes work well. "They're so gentle that you can pretty much use them anywhere," she adds.

Pre- and post-waxing products also boost client comfort. Applying cleansers and numbing sprays prep the area for wax, while skin soothers and antiseptic wipes reduce the appearance of post-waxing redness, bumps and other mild irritation. Products containing isopropyl alcohol minimize bumps and ingrown hairs when applied between services. Plus, clients can use them daily for up to one week before waxing to maximize their effects. "It eases the pull of the wax by preventing it from



TAKE CARE: Talc or baby powder soothes skin and absorbs moisture.

sticking to the skin,” says Steve Rosen, president of Tend Skin International (www.tendskin.com).

3 Practice proper techniques. Even the most routine Brazilian requires care and effort. Before applying the wax, clip the client’s pubic hair—using a comb and sterile scissors or a trimmer—to about one-quarter of an inch. This reduces the risk of the product grabbing onto large sections of hair and minimizes the strength required for removal. “Ask the client to trim the hair if you’re not comfortable doing it,” Shipman says. Also, try baby

powder or talc to soothe the skin and absorb moisture.

Apply wax against the growth of the hair as you begin the service. Make sure every follicle is coated, then finish by following the grain—similar to frosting a cupcake. It’s a method that Satin Smooth (www.satinsmooth.com) terms “shrink wrapping.”

If you’re using hard wax, apply it thicker and give it some time to set. Ensure that the temperature in the treatment room is between 68° and 72°—not just for your client’s comfort but to keep the wax in top condition.

Working in small sections is most effective because pubic hair tends to grow in several directions. Remember to keep the skin taut but not overstretched. To remove the wax, pull the strip in the opposite direction of the hair growth while staying as close to the skin as possible. “Move parallel to the body and then out to the side,” says Jaira Lima, owner of Jaira’s Waxing Salon (www.brazilianbikiniwax.org) with locations in South River and South Amboy, New Jersey. “Don’t pull up, or you’ll risk breaking the hair.”

Sometimes, waxing won’t remove everything, so tweezing may be necessary. Avoid reapplying wax or a removal strip over the same area twice as it can cause the client additional discomfort—bruises, burns or tears to the skin, or scars to the hair follicles. “You’ve already peeled off the upper epidermal layer,” Weiner says. “Waxing the same area twice increases the likelihood of injury.”

Marketing Brazilian Waxing

Despite the recent chatter about the safety of Brazilian waxing, clients still desire a feel that’s smooth as silk. They can turn to other methods such as laser hair removal, but those are more expensive and don’t offer immediate results. Guests seeking sensual looks popularized by cultural institutions such as *Sex and the City* and Victoria’s Secret want them now, according to DAYSPA advisory board member Larry Oskin.

“Men and women want to look good nude—at the beach or in the bedroom,” says the president of Marketing Solutions (www.mktgsols.com). Use that appeal to theme packages or specials for Brazilian waxing—especially since it’s popular year-round instead of just during the summer. Holidays, anniversaries and the wedding season provide opportunities to attract new clients.

There are also many ways to brand the Brazilian, according to Linda Orsuto. “We call it a ‘customized bikini,’” says the owner of 800 West Salon & Spa (www.800west.com)

in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. “This way, we can personalize it in the room with each client.”

Oskin agrees. “Not everyone knows what ‘Brazilian’ means, so I’d save it for the consultation,” he says. “Use phrases such as ‘bare essentials’ or ‘dare to bare’—catchy headlines where you talk about going totally nude. Men are getting the service too and may not respond to ‘Brazilian.’”

Embarrassment remains the biggest drawback to booking the service. Therefore, you should take advantage of your most valuable resource—your clients. “Word-of-mouth referral is best with this kind of service,” says Mary Velek, owner of Spa Villa Salon & Day Spa (www.spavillasalon.com) in Santa Clarita, California. “We give our clients a referral credit. For every three people they send to us, they get half off a service.”

After all, who else would you ask about such an intimate service than a good friend?

4 Consider individual needs.

Various demographics will visit your spa for Brazilians. Here's what to expect:

All sizes and shapes. Clients need to assume many positions during the service. Most are comfortable lying on their backs with their legs folded or holding their knees out to the side, up toward the ceiling and overhead as the procedure progresses. When it comes time to wax the backside, many can prop themselves up on their hands and knees. "This works best because it makes the skin tighter," says Linda Orsuto, owner of 800 West Salon & Spa (www.800west.com) in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

However, those who don't have a lot of body strength may need some assistance. You can make them more comfortable by supporting the weight of their legs or helping them adjust while they lie on their backs. "We wax the anal area by having them lie on their stomachs while holding the cheeks open with their own hands," Brazilian Boot Camp's Zillmann says. For clients who find it too difficult to hold themselves up, keep an exercise ball on hand for them to use. In addition, prompt heavier guests to hold the areas around their stomachs and thighs, as increased skin folds may make waxing more difficult.

First-timers. Spa-goers new to waxing should provide written, knowing consent before the service begins. "This means that all of the risks involved have been disclosed to the client," Antoline says.



"We have Brazilian waxing clients from ages 14 to 74, including men. It's much better than a laser treatment. Lasers can't remove hair in intimate areas because it hurts too much. Plus, waxing is less expensive."

**Jonice Padilha, co-owner,
J. Sisters International Salon
and Spa, New York City**

Include information on the consent form about all potential tendencies and reactions—such as ingrown hairs, redness, skin tears and bruising—and retain a copy of it with both of your signatures. Some spa owners prefer forms that acknowledge ongoing consent, while others ask clients to sign one before each service.

Of course, be gentle with newbies. "When clients first get waxed, their hair is often coarse and stubborn, so hard wax would work best," says Susanna DiSotto, marketing director for Satin Smooth. "As you continue waxing over time, the hair becomes more fragile, and you can switch to soft wax."

Mirta Moyano says that a first-time Brazilian waxing can sometimes change mid-appointment. "A client may seem like a good candidate, but sometimes the pain and skin irritation are too much," says the owner of Mirta Moyano Skin Care & Body Spa (www.mirtamoyanoskincare.com) in Long Beach, California. "We end up doing something more like a regular bikini waxing."

Young clients. As Zillmann mentioned earlier, teenagers now request Brazilian waxing services. However, this may increase liability risks for some providers. "For example, in the state of Illinois, people under the age of 17 have no legal right to form a contract, which means they can't do it without a parent's permission," says Antoline, an Illinois resident. Even if waxing minors is allowed in your state, obtain written consent from a parent or legal guardian to be on the safe side.

Women of child-bearing age. Many clients tend to be more sensitive to pain during menstruation due to the influx of hormones. The optimal time for waxing is the two weeks following a woman's menstrual period.

Some service providers won't perform Brazilians on an expectant mother once she reaches her second trimester. They believe the procedure's positioning, anxiety and pain may induce preterm labor. Still, many have no problem booking pregnant women as long as they're regular waxing clients.

For expectant mothers, wax small sections at

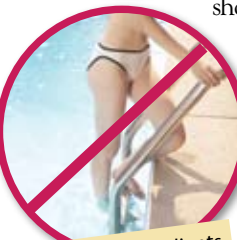


BE PREPARED: Which demographic will visit your spa?

a time. “The texture is different, and the skin is more stretched during pregnancy,” says Jen Milas, an esthetician at 800 West Salon & Spa. “I powder the area well and hold the skin taut.”

Men. Male Brazilian waxing, also known as a “Manzilian,” requires additional knowledge and training. Some female employees may not feel at ease performing it. Of Spa Villa’s three estheticians, only one is a man, and he’s the sole provider of Brazilians to male clients. “With this kind of service, I don’t allow my female estheticians to work on men, or vice versa,” says Velek, whose facility provides Brazilians to men by referral only.

As with the female version, this service removes all pubic hair. Most experts recommend using hard wax for male Brazilians, but it can be just as effective to use soft wax as well. “We suggest it around the pubic area,” DiSotto says. “Use hard wax on the scrotum and penis.” While trimming the hair is a typical step in any Brazilian waxing, it’s vital for a man. “This helps reduce skin sensitivity,” she adds.



NO-NOS: Teach clients what to avoid before and after each service.

- Applying lotion in the areas to be waxed
- Consumption of alcohol or caffeinated beverages within several hours
- Trimming the pubic hair

In pre-waxing consultations, suggest that clients wear loose garments to their appointments. This allows for optimum comfort following the service. “Not wearing the proper clothing can cause friction or increase perspiration,” Chistova says. “I also advise them to take ibuprofen beforehand.”

The employee who answers your phone should know the protocol for waxing clients. In addition, publish your guidelines in confirmation emails or on your website.

When a first-time client arrives, you should conduct a thorough consultation with her. Discuss the entire procedure, explaining what the area will look like afterward. If she’s never been exposed to wax, conduct a patch test and wait 48 hours to evaluate whether she might be allergic.

This consultation should also include a written intake of the client’s medical history. Find out if the spa-goer has herpes or other health conditions. People with diabetes or weakened immune systems (such as with HIV) aren’t good candidates for waxing services—the same as with clients undergoing radiation or chemotherapy treatments.

Plus, check with new and returning spa-goers about any current or recent prescription drugs they’re taking. Medications that sensitize the dermis—such as the skincare treatments Retin-A, Differin and Accutane generics, as well as blood

5 Educate clients.

When a spa-goer makes an appointment for Brazilian waxing, advise her to avoid the following activities beforehand:

- Direct exposure to sun or a tanning bed within the previous 24 hours
- Sexual activity within 24 hours
- Excessive exfoliation or scrubs in the area within 48 hours
- Shaving the area or using hair removal products within the previous two weeks

Additional Resources

The following DVDs demonstrate Brazilian waxing protocols and techniques:

American International Industries clean + easy “Brazilian Full Body Hard Wax Instructional”; **GiGi** “Brazilian Wax,” 800.635.8966, www.aibeauty.com

Banner Therapy Products “Advanced Brazilian Bikini Waxing,” 888.277.1188, www.bannertherapy.com

“Brazilian Boot Camp with Tina Zillmann,” 800.689.0499, www.brazilianwaxbootcamp.com

“Creative Brazilian Waxing Techniques with Eva Mileski and Teresa Halencak,” available through www.amazon.com

Eva’s Esthetics “The Whole Ball of Wax with Lori Nestore, aka the Wax Queen,” 800.568.5886, www.evasesthetics.com
Nufree “Brazilian”; “Guyzilian Tutorial,” 800.247.2405, www.nufree.com

Satin Smooth “Bare Facts: Female Brazilian Step by Step Waxing Techniques”; “Male Brazilian Step by Step Waxing Techniques,” 800.726.4202, www.satinsmooth.com

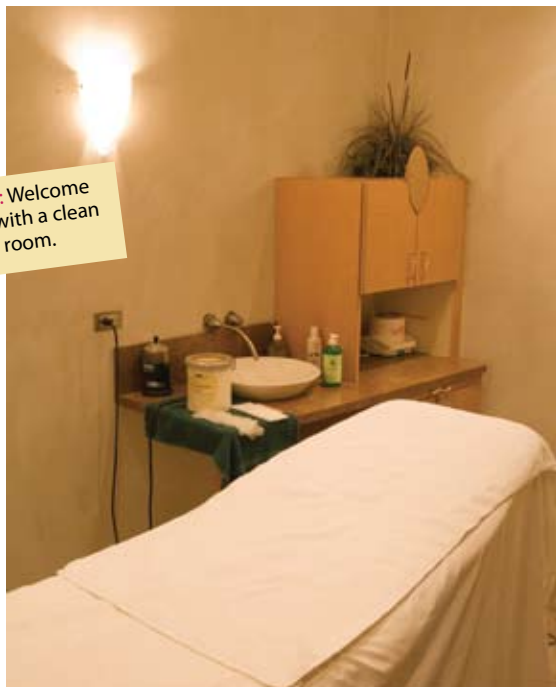
Universal Companies “Advanced Brazilian Bikini Waxing,” 800.558.5571, www.universalcompanies.com

thinners—are listed as contraindications in a report that Weiner prepared for the New Jersey State Board of Cosmetology and Hairstyling. “One client didn’t tell our esthetician that she was using Accutane,” Zillmann says. “She ended up tearing some of the skin, and the client said, ‘I’ll see you in court.’” Weiner’s entire report can be found on www.dayspamagazine.com.

Clients should also leave the treatment room with a clear list of instructions. They need to avoid contact with these products and activities immediately following waxing services:

- Tanning beds or sunbathing for 24 hours
- Spray- or self-tanners on the bikini region
- Exfoliation and topical acidic products for several days
- Hot showers, chlorinated pools, spas and saunas

To reduce redness and irritation, recommend homecare procedures and products. For example, Shipman advises his guests to use a soft, fine brush post-waxing in the bikini area to prevent ingrown hairs. “Dry-brushing daily exfoliates the skin and allows new hair growth without it becoming ingrown,” he says. Products such as PFB Vanish (www.pfbvanish.com) do the same with isopropyl alcohol. Scrubs and the same skin soothers you apply immediately after the service are also good candidates for retail.



TIDY UP: Welcome clients with a clean waxing room.

BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY TC SALON SPAS



“The old waxes had to be heated to such high temperatures that the inherent hazard was burning the skin. Not inflicting pain or potential risk—that was a professional decision you had to make.”
Rosemary Weiner, chair, Day Spa Association

6 Provide a superior service.

Brazilian waxing is competitively offered at spas and salons across the country. To distinguish yourself and provide a quality service, you must use professional products to reduce the risk of injury. These items typically contain more pine resin, which smoothes and softens the hair shaft for removal. A common misconception is that these products are more expensive, but even so, wax itself is only a small portion of the overhead cost. “Even if you charge moderate prices, the most expensive product will still only run about 5% of the total cost of the service,” Eva’s Esthetics’ Nestore says.

Going above and beyond with your time investment pays good dividends as well. While moving quickly through the actual waxing process helps minimize discomfort, even the most skilled service providers allow enough time to complete the procedure carefully. “A Brazilian waxing should take a trained esthetician at least a half hour,” Zillmann says. “That’s a good amount of time to do a proper job without harming the client.” It should also include any prep work and follow-up.

Create a library of informative, step-by-step DVDs to stay up-to-date with methods and techniques (see “Additional Resources”). You should also support your staff with continuing education to comply with current regulations and safe practices. “The point is to raise their comfort level,” Weiner says. “If you don’t train your staff to do it right, and it’s not in your protocol, it won’t happen.”

Education serves as a vital tool in the Brazilian waxing procedure, especially when the one constant is the service provider. “What it comes down to is who’s waxing you,” Velek says. “It’s the technique—you need to know how to pull the hair, the direction it’s going, how much wax to apply. The more you do it, the better you become.” ●

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Visit www.dayspamagazine.com for more products and waxing protocols.