In 2012, former Vice President Joe Biden stated that trans rights are the civil rights movement of our generation. Now, in 2018, we have seen an increase in transgender awareness and movements, but there are still issues members of the trans community face in everyday life. For transgender men and women, this can often revolve around receiving health care.

For transgender men, gynecological care remains extremely important to their health and well-being. We at Women’s Care Clinic offer care for all who need it. In this blog, you will learn a bit more about health care barriers the trans community faces, as well as the need for gynecological care for trans men, and how Women’s Care Clinic does all we can to offer care where it is lacking.

A Pattern of Reduced Care for Transgender Men

There is a lack of health care providers today offering gynecological care for transgender men, leading to reduced visits and check-ups. Transgender men who choose not to or have not yet received a hysterectomy (uterus removal), oophorectomy (ovary removal), or vaginectomy (vagina removal) still require and benefit from yearly gynecologist appointments.

Lack of health care in this area can lead to undiagnosed HPV, cervical, uterine or ovarian cancer, and STIs. The barriers trans men face when seeking care can be dangerous to their health, and we at Women’s Care Clinic proudly offer a safe space for care for anyone who requires it.
The Importance of Routine Check-Ups and Pap Smears for Trans Men

Being trans is a fluid and personal experience. Not all trans men undergo a gender reassignment, hysterectomy, mastectomy, or oophorectomy. It is important then, as a transgender man with female reproductive organs, to seek out care every year.

These yearly physicals are a great way to stay on top of your sexual health and overall well-being. Most notably, you can expect a pap smear every three to five years, depending on your age. These are done to test for the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), STIs, and some cancers. As a trans man, you are still susceptible to these issues and diseases until you no longer possess the organs at risk.

How Your Gynecologist Can Guide You Through Transition

Finding the right gynecologist to help you through your transition is important. They should be a part of your team and able to answer questions about elective surgeries such as a hysterectomy or oophorectomy should you wish to know more. No matter what stage of transition, your gynecologist is a great resource.

How WCC Provides a Safe and Welcoming Space for Transgender Patients

At Women’s Care Clinic, we pride ourselves on offering a safe space for every patient in need of gynecological care. Dr. Kaaren Olesen, the founder of our clinic, is one of the leading gynecologists in the Des Moines area offering hysterectomies to trans men.

We also strive to create a welcoming and inviting environment for our patients. We offer gender-neutral bathrooms, as well as changing gender identifiers in your file. If there are other ways we can improve our care for transgender patients, or if you have any
questions, feel free to contact us today! You can give us a call at (515) 276-5543 or fill out a form on our website here!
Your Best Bikini Line: Treating & Preventing Ingrown Hairs

Summertime is synonymous with swimsuit season, and you want your bikini line to look its best! Yet, common hair removal methods leave irritation, bumps, and ingrown hairs in its wake. Today, we are going to walk you through the common causes and symptoms of ingrown hairs, how to treat the ones you have, and how to avoid them coming back!

Causes and Symptoms of Ingrown Hairs

The number one cause of ingrown hairs is hair removal. Instead of growing straight up from the follicle, the hair grows under a layer of skin, causing inflammation, irritation and those noticeable red bumps. Tweezing, waxing, and shaving all greatly increase the risk of ingrown hairs. Yet this can be exacerbated by poor hair removal methods. Waxing or shaving in the wrong directions is an easy way to irritate your bikini line.

A few other ways you put yourself at risk of ingrown hairs is using a dull and old blade and wearing tight clothing or rough fabric that rubs and chafes your bikini line in the summer. Both are bound to cause irritation, red bumps, and cause unwanted attention near your bikini line on a pool or beach day.

Treating Existing Ingrown Hairs

If you suffer consistently from ingrown hairs, try one or a number of these methods to treat and heal your skin.

1. Soften with a warm washcloth

Using a wet, warm washcloth helps soften your skin, opening up the pores and hair follicles. This is not only soothing to your painful ingrown hairs but also helps prep your skin for exfoliation.
2. Gently exfoliate
As ingrown hairs grow under the skin, removing layers of dead skin can help you find and remove the hairs. You can use something as gentle as a wet washcloth, rubbing in circular motions on your bikini line, an all-natural sugar body scrub, or a body brush. If this exfoliation isn’t strong enough, you can get a retinoid prescription from your doctor to quicken the process.

3. Pull out any visible ingrown hairs carefully
Once your hairs are softened and your skin exfoliated, you can take a pair of clean, sanitized tweezers and extract the ingrown hairs. Avoid digging in or breaking the skin to get to a hair. This is what the warm washcloth and exfoliation should help with. You will want to gently pull the hair out of the skin, but not pluck it. This will cause the skin to just grow over the new hair again. Wait until the skin has healed to remove hair if possible.

4. Use creams and lotions to reduce inflammation
If your bikini line is uncommonly sore, irritated and bothersome, talk to your doctor about a steroid cream to help with the swelling.

5. Stop shaving altogether
If push comes to shove and your ingrown hairs are not improving, go longer in between shaves or stop shaving altogether until your skin is healed and not irritated. This may not be the short-term answer you are looking for, but it will improve your skin and bikini line in the long run!

Preventing New Ingrown Hairs
Once you have tackled all of your current ingrown hairs, and your skin is in a good place, you will want to have every tool in your toolbox for preventing another ingrown issue. Here are a few tips to get your best bikini line!
1. Prep your skin properly
Before shaving, be sure to gently exfoliate and cleanse your skin. Make sure you find a shaving cream that works for your skin as well. If you are very prone to ingrown hairs, look for something made for sensitive skin types.

2. Shave at the end of the shower
Waiting to shave at the end of a shower may not seem like it would do much, but it does! The longer you spend in the shower, the softer your hair becomes and the more your pores open. This makes it easier to shave with no tugging or pulling and allows for a closer, smoother shave.

3. Go with the hair, not against
We are taught to shave our legs against the grain, so to speak. When it comes to your bikini line, shaving in the direction the hair grows is an easy way to avoid irritation and bumps. If you wait until the end of the shower to shave as well, you will still get a close, clean, bump-free shave!

4. Post shave care is key
How you care for your skin after hair removal is vital. Be sure to start exfoliating the bikini area around 48 hours after hair removal to keep ingrown hairs at bay. Applying a non-scented, natural moisturizer daily also helps keep the skin and hair soft.

5. Avoid irritating clothing and undergarments
After hair removal, do your best for the first few days to avoid tight clothing or itchy undergarments. Soft, stretchy clothing and underwear are key to avoiding unwanted irritation!

Don't be bashful about your bikini line! Prep for summer with a bikini laser hair reduction session!

The easiest and most effective way to avoid ingrown hairs altogether on your bikini line is investing in laser hair removal. This is a safe and effective option that saves you money
in the long-run, once you can ditch your razors, creams, lotions, and more! Call us today to schedule an ICON laser hair removal consultation or [visit our website to learn more](#).

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Do Not Copy
Despite our modern love of summer sunbathing, tanning has only been popular in our culture for less than 100 years. Made unexpectedly popular by Coco Chanel, who came home from a vacation with a tan unseen before on higher class women, we have since been obsessed with achieving that sun-kissed glow. Yet, as the years have progressed and tanning methods become more and more advanced, from tanning oils to tanning beds, our understanding of sun damage has also improved. Let’s take a deeper look at why you should put summer skincare on the top of your priority list this season, as well as ways to achieve a nice summer color without jeopardizing your skin’s health and appearance!

**Why is the sun so bad for skin?**

You may be wondering how and why the sun damages skin. Overarchingly, the sun is necessary for human survival, as we use sunlight to create vitamin D. Yet, overexposure to sunlight damages your skin. Spending time in the sun creates a tan due to increased production of melanin, a pigment that protects your skin from the sun’s ultraviolet rays. When exposed to too much of the sun’s ultraviolet rays your skin burns, which damages the skin’s fibers called elastin, causing wrinkles, sun damage, and thin and easily bruised skin. These effects may not show themselves in your younger years but will become much more noticeable as you age.

**Summer Skincare 101**

**Find the right SPF for your skin type**

Finding the right SPF can be tricky. The SPF number on a bottle indicates how long it
would take your skin to redden when using the product exactly as it states in comparison to the time it would take to burn without protection. For example, an SPF 30 would take you 30 minutes longer to burn than if you weren’t wearing a sunscreen at all.

If you have more melanin in your skin naturally, you may only need an SPF 15 or SPF 30 sunscreen. If you are pale and prone to freckles and burning, SPF 50 may be the way to go.

But don’t be fooled! A higher SPF sunscreen does not mean you can spend more time in the sun without reapplying. A sunscreen’s SPF only works when used as directed on the bottle. Reapplication is key to avoiding sun damage, no matter the strength of the lotion.

**Buy a broad-spectrum sunscreen**

When shopping around for sunscreen be sure to purchase a broad-spectrum brand. This helps block both UVA and UVB rays. UVB is what causes sunburns, while UVA is the culprit of wrinkling and aging.

**Apply before going outside**

Why is it advised to apply sunscreen 30 minutes before exposure? By applying sunscreen before going outside, you give the ingredients time to bind to your skin before sweating or swimming. When applying, it is advised to use 1 oz of sunscreen. To visualize, that is enough sunscreen to fit in a shot glass!

**Re-apply often**

While each sunscreen brand might have different reapplication times, it is common
practice to reapply every 2 hours, using the same 1 oz volume of sunscreen each time. It may seem wasteful and messy, but protected, younger looking skin is worth it!

**Stay out of the midday sun**
If you are planning on spending time outdoors during the day, try your best to avoid the hours between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., as this is the time of day when the sun’s rays are the strongest.

**Find fashionable covered clothing**
If you are pale and want to go the extra mile to protect your skin, find lightweight, long sleeve clothing to cover up in the hot summer sun!

**Protect your eyes and lips too**
Our skin is the largest organ and most prone to sun damage, however, it is important to protect your eyes and lips from the sun as well. Don’t leave the house without your favorite sunglasses and lip balm with SPF in it!

**Tanning Alternatives**
If you are still craving a summery golden glow but want to avoid the sun damage, at-home tanners and spray tans are a great option! These will give you the sun-kissed look you desire while avoiding sun damage.

However, just because you look more tan doesn’t mean your skin is any more protected from sun damage. Be sure to still apply and reapply sunscreen to keep your skin looking youthful and tan.

**Reverse Past Sun Damage with ICON Lasers!**
If sun damage from your youth is starting to pop up, you can start reducing the spots and skin aging with our ICON laser services! Treat yourself to either our Three-For-Me Skin Revitalization, Skin Renewal, or Dark Spot Correction services! Call (515) 276-5543 to set up an appointment today.