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NOVEMBER 2005

“Guys who get sugared never go back to waxing.”

## Sweet Nothing

Getting rid of body hair can be a pain—literally. David Thorpe finds out if sugar and water can make everything nice

I'm a hairy guy. Period. I've tried Nair, hot wax, lasers, and electrolysis, but they were messy, painful, or expensive. So, at 36, I've decided to take the path of least resistance and love my hirsute body. After all, the hair is part of me. And I'm cool, I hope. So my hairy ass must be cool, too.

Now if only I were a better liar. The truth is that I would love to find a cleaner, less painful depilation process—and maybe sugaring will do the trick. I heard about the technique from a friend who is on his own never-ending anti-fur campaign. Initial reports are promising: The method involves rubbing a room-temperature “dough” made of sugar, water, and lemon juice onto the skin. The dough is then pulled off, taking the hair underneath with it. Unlike waxing, the concoction is supposed to stick only to the strands, not the flesh, and it yanks them out in the direction



they're growing, resulting in little or no pain. Also, the sweet procedure is more hygienic than waxing, which employs a spatula that is often dipped into the same jar of sticky stuff for a dozen clients; in sugaring, each man gets his own glob of goo.

Sign me up, I tell the resident sugarer at a spa in Manhattan. Jovial on the phone, she's downright vivacious when we meet in person. She leads me to the treatment room, where I strip down to my boxers and wait for her to return. When she does,

Before I can regain my composure to protest, the hair puller is on to her second jerk. Damn! A dozen wrist-flicking snaps later and I'm clutching the table like it's a life preserver. By the time she reaches my butt, I've learned that flexing my muscles helps ease the pain. Never have I squeezed my cheeks so tightly.

"All done," she says after 45 minutes. I jump up, dress, and take off, mumbling, "Thanks." At home I check out the scene of the crime in a mirror. Every last hair is gone, but my back is red, and it stays that way for a few hours.

Feeling slightly duped, I call Lina Kennedy, president of Alexandria Professional Body Sugaring, a spa products distribution and training center in Welland, Ontario. "What went wrong?"

"It can hurt the first time," she says. "And men with sweaty backs can be extra sensitive because the sugar can't always get a good grip."

Sweaty? Not me! Lina suggests I try another aesthetician for my follow-up.

Two weeks later, I head to a spa in West Caldwell, New Jersey. I notice one difference immediately. The sugar here is softer; it's been mixed with more water. It's also warmer, and the sugarer covers less of my back at a time. I wince in anticipation of the first tug, but when it comes, the pinch

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she's all business. "So where are we going to sugar today?" she asks.

"Back, shoulders, and maybe my ass?" I say.

"Okay. Lie down. And turn over."

My hair is too long for immediate ripping, so she trims it with clippers first. After brushing me off, she dabs on Veral 6, a drying powder that keeps the sugar from sticking to my skin. Total prep time: 10 minutes. Then the sugarer scoops a handful of yellowish paste from a plastic jar, kneads it, smooths it onto one of my shoulder blades, and pulls it off a second later. Ouch!

lasts only a second. I'm amazed and relieved. In half an hour, my shoulders and back are absolutely smooth. And I don't dress and dash. The aesthetician slathers a soothing mud mask on my back and says: "Tons of guys who get sugared never go back to waxing."

About three weeks later, my skin is still smooth and I'm thinking I may keep it this way. I've been talking up the practice to friends ever since I tried it, with one caveat: Don't settle for a situation that leaves you clenching your cheeks; find a sugarer with an easy touch and very soft paste.

To find an aesthetician near you, call Alexandria Professional Body Sugaring, 800-95-SUGAR.