

# GROOMING

## SHAVE TALE

Executive collar." "Businessman's collar." No, those aren't shirt-collarstyles-they are euphemisms for the blotchy and bumpy necks that plague many men. They blame the tonclition on the obligatory office dress shirt and uptight tie. Neck rashes, however, aren't confined to the white-collar set. While starched collars can be chafing, the real cause of this irritating situation is more likely traceable to shaving. And dewhiskering twice daily can compound the aggravation.

Although it's generally acknowledged that shaving with razor and blade yields the closest shave (not surprisingly, electric-shaver makers won't concede this), shaving rashes do occur among some men whichever method is followed.

In trying for the closest possible shave, many men direct the blade or the shaver against the beard's grain. While this produces closer shaves, the whiskers are being clipped beneath the skin's surface. Then the sharp stubble pricks and pierces the epidermis, causing inflammation and maybe infection-in other words, the classic symptoms of executive collar.

Less taut than the face, the neck area is constantly wrinkling/rubbing against itself and irritates easily. While the direction of dewhiskering plays a pivotal role in neck rash, other elements can also enter the scenario.

**SHAVING PREPARATIONS:** Ouch-producing discomfort during shaving arises from pulling, the resistance of the beard to the cutting edge or edges. Whether you're using a wet (blade) or dry (electric) shaving method, the face should first be thoroughly degreased and deoiled with lots of soap and water, so the cutters won't be deflected. In the wet method, hot water should be splashed on the face for a minute or two after cleansing, since water softens the beard. Softened whiskers offer less resistance, hence, less pulling against the blade. The shaving cream or foam should be applied and allowed to rest for another minute or so (to augment wetting) before shaving.

For the dry method, however, the face should be towed completely dry following washing and rinsing. The rotary cutting edges of electric shavers cause less pulling when the whiskers present stiff and upright targets. Pre-electric shave preparations provide astringency to stiffen the beard.

**LUBRICATION:** Friction between the shaving implement and the skin can also irritate the face and neck. Gliding without dragging means less trauma, less scraping of the skin. In wet-shaving creams or foams, lubricating ingredients are

suspended in the preparations; these build up a more protective shield during the minute or two hiatus between applying the cream or foam and brandishing the blade.

With pre-electric shaving preparations, the lubricating oils to promote gliding cling to the face and neck after the astringent that stiffened the beard has evaporated.

**EDGES:** Dulled cutting edges call for more pressure to raze the beard. In wet shaving, more angle must be employed to compensate for a dull blade. Unfortunately, angulated stubble is prone to curling inward and re-entering the skin. With electric shavers, cutting edges that need honing produce raggedly uneven stubble, likewise promoting ingrown hairs.

**DISINFECTING** Though a man using an electric shaver is less likely to nick or cut himself seriously, superficial abrasions are inevitable with either dry or wet method. Disinfecting with alcohol, astringent or after-shave lotion is a wise precaution. Shaving implements should also be disinfected before and after every shave to reduce the risk of irritation from dirt or foreign particles.

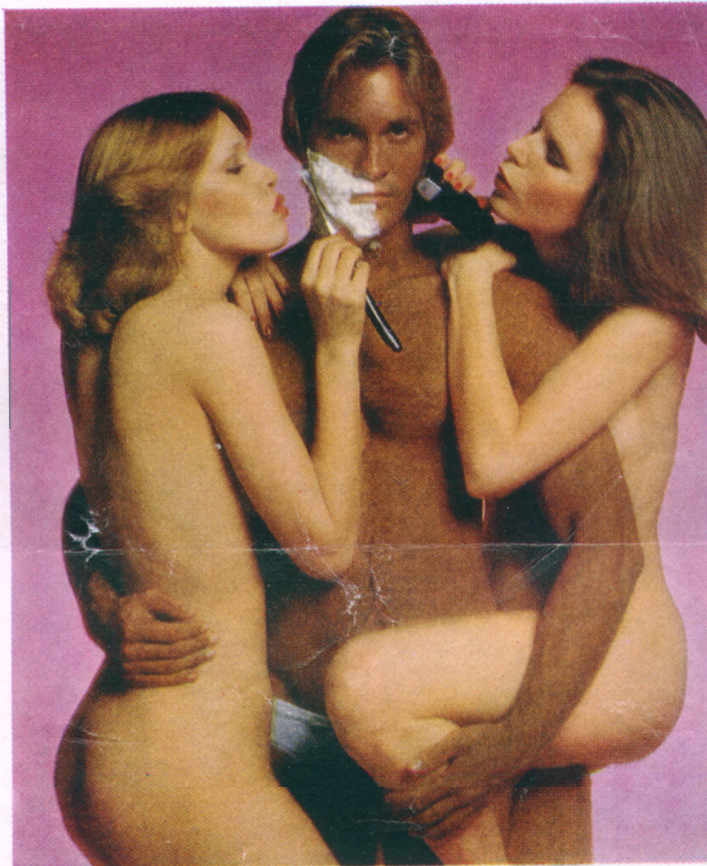
**SOOTHING:** Dewhiskered faces are more vulnerable to inflammations because of the micro-abrasions on the face and especially on the neck. Conventional

after-shave lotions do not contain enough soothing ingredients for men with sensitive skins. Newer after-shave balms soothe without stinging while also depositing an invisible shield against germs and pollutants in the environment. Talcs guard against chafing.

Following the proper shaving steps from scratch to finish, the average guy shouldn't find he has a scratchy neck rash. However, trying for too close a shave only increases the risk of businessman's collar.

Although electric-shaver makers and the producers of razor blades are bound to disagree, the man who recognizes the value of milder shaving, but who doesn't want to sport a perpetual five-o'clock shadow, might experiment with alternating between wet and dry shaving. In the morning, before heading for the office, shave with an electric shaver on its gentlest setting. In the evening, when extra closeness counts most, shave with razor and blade. However, try for a comfortably close, not a superclose, shave in both instances. If a neck rash still blemishes your complexion after trying these countermeasures, maybe you really are allergic to that starch in your collar. Or to any number of other villains. Solution? See a dermatologist.

--CHARLES HIX



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