

Same Same But Different - Waxing versus Sugaring

Lilliane Caron discusses the differences between waxing and sugaring.

Sugaring has been around for centuries and is an early form of waxing. It's currently enjoying a resurgence in the beauty scene. While most therapists are well aware of sugaring and its deep history, Body Sugaring is becoming an increasingly popular request from clients, today.

So why, after centuries of flying under the radar and being outshone by waxing has sugaring started to make a comeback? These days consumers are looking for more natural alternatives for their food, skincare and cleaning products. We are taking more notice of what we're putting on and in our bodies.

Firstly, let's discuss what body sugaring actually is. The technique of sugaring uses a natural toffee-like substance that is kneaded into the skin repeatedly, removing the hair as it goes. The paste is spread or moulded onto the skin by hand or with a spatula against the direction of hair growth. It's said to seep down into the hair follicle and wrap itself around the shaft of the hair. When the sugaring paste is 'flicked' off, the hair including the bulb, slides out in the direction in which it grows. This technique differs to waxing which removes the hair in the opposite direction.

One of my very first memories of hair removal is making my own sugar paste with my Lebanese friends and using it on each other! Back then sugaring was more common because you would actually make it yourself in a pot on the stove. How funny it is, that everything seems to work in a full circle!

While waxing and sugaring techniques are different, the results are much the same when performed correctly. Therapists who have been trained in waxing and decide to offer sugaring essentially need to 'unlearn' everything they know about waxing to become proficient in sugaring and perfect their technique.

Some clients will swear black and blue that sugaring hurts less than waxing, but just like any treatment it really comes down to the skill of the therapist. Both techniques remove hair from the follicle and that's not going to tickle. They can however be substantially less painful if the therapist is performing the treatment with good technique. Sugar addicts claim that waxing can lead to more broken hairs, however without a proficient technique sugaring can too. So the key message here - is whatever your choice - waxing or sugaring - ensure you are well trained and you use good quality products on your clients.

Anyone who has ever heard me talk about waxes, will know that the consistency of your wax is vital when it comes to delivering the perfect waxing treatment. Sugaring is no different. Sugaring paste is warmed only slightly, making it almost impossible to burn clients. The paste gains temperature through body heat and this can play a role in how it works. It can also work differently in warmer climates and spoil easily. It will crystallise if exposed to moisture - even the smallest amount of sanitising solution or water can affect the consistency and effectiveness of the product, and if it's heated too much it will burn. A big advantage of sugaring is that generally only one ball of paste is required per body part, so there's no going back and forth to the wax pot or risk of double dipping.

Sugaring pastes are available in different varieties. Firm pastes are ideal for beginners as they're easier to control. They are designed to be used on warmer areas of the body like the Brazilian and underarm, are good for smaller areas of the body and for use in warmer climates. A soft paste is suited to a more experienced therapist and for use on larger areas such as legs and arms that normally aren't as warm. I find using a sugar-based strip wax in conjunction with your sugaring paste can speed up the process of removing hair from the larger areas whilst still giving your clients an all-natural treatment.



Ingredients in waxes can vary greatly; they can be derived from unrefined resins (pine resin) or synthetic resins. There is much less room for variance when it comes to manufacturing sugaring pastes. Sugaring pastes or gels are essentially made from sugar, water and lemon juice. While all recipes are slightly different, it has been made from those same basic ingredients since it originated in the ancient Middle-Eastern practice centuries ago.

Because of the basic and natural formula, sugaring is gaining a reputation for not causing skin irritations, which is backlash that waxing can sometimes cop. Sugaring can absolutely be a solution for clients that choose not to wax because they suffer from reactions and irritations from even the most sensitive waxes.

If you're considering adding body sugaring to your treatment menu, there are some important things for you to think about. Firstly, ask your clients if they are happy with their waxing treatments? If they're not happy, delve into the reasons why. Are your therapists lacking confidence or expertise? Rather than re-training your staff in a skill they have already learnt, maybe they would benefit from a refresher waxing workshop. Getting their waxing skills up to scratch will be a lot easier, quicker and cost effective than learning an entirely new technique.

You need to determine if sugaring fits your business model. Some salons and spas base all of their offerings around natural, vegan friendly and organic products and services. This can be a real point of difference. There will always be a niche client market wanting holistic and natural treatments, and business savvy salons can reap the benefits of this. Salons offering this exclusive service will generally charge more than a waxing treatment as it does take more time to perform and while cost effective, the paste does cost more per kilo than most waxes. In saying this, clients seeking natural alternatives are generally willing to pay that little bit extra.

If you have a mobile business, sugaring can be a great option, especially if you'd like to specialise in it. It requires little to no heating, making travelling and setting up for appointments easy, and one ball will generally get you through an entire treatment. As sugaring paste can simply be washed off with warm water, no extra product is necessary during the treatment or for cleaning-up. Clients can be turned over quickly and efficiently. Just remember to clean your mobile station regularly as ants LOVE sugar!

You should also keep in mind personal preference, it's no secret that I favour waxing, I find sugaring more taxing on my wrists. But everyone is different, I know therapists who find sugaring to be much easier on their body, so it really does come down to what you like doing and how your body works.

While sugar paste will not necessarily replace all waxes, there may be a place for it alongside the waxes on your trolley.

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