



a few
good
men

by Kelly Svoboda

market wisely and you'll get your guy



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—Marc Edwards

Your female clients are definitely not spa-shy. They love your signature facial. They book body wraps, scrubs, bikini waxes and eyebrow arches. And what about the guys? Well, times are changing, and buffing and waxing is no longer just for their cars. More and more men are turning to professionals with their skin care concerns—and they need all the help they can get.

Nicole Sommers, founder and president of Gents, LLC, an on-site spa service company for men, knows first-hand that even the most enlightened males are behind the times, spa-specifically speaking. “I do my work in clients’ homes and offices,” she says. “That gives me a real insight into what their regimens are. I find stuff in their medicine cabinets that they’ve had since puberty.”

If your 40-year-old executive client is still using Clearasil, you’ve got your work cut out for you. Research shows that although the men’s skin care market, valued at \$108 million last year, is a relatively small part of the \$8 billion market as a whole, it is actually the fastest-growing segment. New Jersey consulting firm [Kline & Company](#) reveals that while sales of all skin care products increased less than 5 percent last year, men’s skin care more than tripled that number, posting a 16 percent jump. Anecdotal evidence suggests many of these products are cleansers and specialized shaving creams, but significant growth can also be attributed to growing interest in anti-aging products.

So those male clients are out there! The secret is to give them solution-based information that goes beyond what’s available in the drugstore aisle.

tough guy tactics

[Marc Edwards](#), owner of [Marc Edwards Skin Care](#) in Los Angeles, has worked as a medical esthetician for six years. He reports that half of his business is composed of male clients. These men are concerned about their appearance and consult him for combating problems incurred primarily from shaving and excess oil. They’re also concerned about looking as young as possible.

“Men’s skin is oily and thicker, so it can take a little bit of a stronger treatment than women’s,” says Edwards. “One strong selling point is the peeling process—exfoliation can keep skin looking younger.” To illustrate his point, Edwards uses this example: because men typically shave the lower part of their face, a 60-year-old man will have fewer lines there than a woman of the same age. “The man will look younger because shaving is exfoliation,” he says. “I try to get ▶



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them to understand it's beneficial for all parts of the face."

Though shaving does have that fringe benefit, the daily process can take its toll on men's skin. Here's where at-home care comes in.

"Shaving is dehydrating," declares Sommers. "Get them away from that bar of deodorant soap into a cleanser that doesn't strip, and have them replenish moisture with an after-shave balm. You can address many issues through shaving." The three products your male clients must have, she adds, are a good cleanser, a quality shaving cream and a non-alcohol based aftershave. "These are the most basic," she says. "Once he's started to gain confidence in you, you can talk about eye creams."

Edwards goes even further. He recommends telling your clients to limit shaving to twice a week, if they can, to let skin recover. And avoid shaving products that contain fragrance: "Ninety-nine percent of all shaving products on drugstore shelves include some type of fragrance, which can be irritating on a freshly shaved face." Keep them stocked

skin survival kit

Forget the dull razor and bar of soap. Every man's tool kit should contain the modern necessities to maintain soft, smooth skin, eliminate dry flakes and protect it from the environment. Send your men packing with:

- gentle daily cleanser
- pre-shave scrub
- shave lotion
- after shave balm
- daily moisturizer
- sunscreen with at least an SPF 15 (higher for older clients)
- medicated topical products for acne-prone clients
- AHA or retinol lotion to reduce wrinkles and sunspots
- fresh razor blades
- a towel to heat before shaving
- an earful of information about advanced procedures—microdermabrasion, peels, etc.



instead with products that contain hydrating hyaluronic acid, vitamin C, as well as a pre-shave scrub that will lift the hair follicle, thus further reducing the potential for irritation.

Want to really get men excited? Edwards says his clients tend to like anything that involves cutting-edge machinery. "Oxygen treatments, high-frequency, galvanic, microdermabrasion—they're into it," he says. "It's like with cell phones and cars. Guys just like equipment."

real men buy products

An educated consumer is your best customer, says Sommers. Though she has the opportunity to poke around in her clients' medicine chests, she suggests estheticians provide a detailed intake form to each client that includes questions about skin concerns and grooming habits. That gives you the launch pad to start a conversation about his daily regimen before the treatment, and, post-service, you can talk more about specific recommendations. ▶



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“During the treatment, I talk about what I’m using and its benefits,” says Sommers. “I put it in terms like Home Depot—this is the problem, and this is how we fix it. It’s simple and to the point.” Sommers also leaves behind a shaving “tip sheet” that sets men straight in a non-threatening way. Edwards also writes out recommendations for clients, which he calls “prescribing.” “It sounds more clinical that way,” he notes.

Men are visual creatures, so an eye-catching retail area is a must. Michelle Novak is owner of Massaggio in Scottsdale, Arizona, which boasts an adjoining 8,000-square-foot retail store. One area has been designated “Spa Men,” denoted by the huge poster of a guy hanging from the ceiling. The can’t-miss graphics give men a safe area to steer toward, she says.



Novak also leaves product samples of their popular Bullie line in treatment rooms, so men have the opportunity to test out the cleansers and moisturizers without the hard sell. The information packet lets them know that, unlike other one-size-fits-all men’s lines, this one is designed to meet the needs of different skin types. “They’ve been happy with the products,” says Novak. “It’s our number one way to sell retail.”

price pointers

According to experts, men are more than willing to pay the price for premium skin care as long as they understand what they are getting and why it is better. Says Edwards, “Men will be apt to buy something if it’s simple to follow and not too time-consuming.” Sommers says your expertise is key. “Most cheaper drugstore products are not as effective, so that actually works out to be more expensive for them. Once they see the difference with your products, they’re usually hooked,” she explains.

That old saying that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach? It seems today’s estheticians have found a better route. ■

a close shave

Nicole Sommers, founder of on-site spa company Gents, LLC, sets male clients straight with this “tip sheet.”

1. Water, Water Everywhere

Either shave after taking a warm shower (hot water dehydrates the skin) or after holding a warm, moistened towel to your face for a few minutes. Hair swollen with water is weak and easier to cut. Never shave cold or with a dry face!

2. Crème de la Cream

Massage a quality shave cream into the skin with upward motions. The best products will lock moisture into your whiskers and do not foam up—foam is merely soap-filled water. Leave on one to three minutes before starting to shave.

3. Grains of Wisdom

Shave with the grain—this can be in different directions on your face versus neck area. Shaving against the grain causes ingrown hairs (razor bumps) and is advised only as a way to donate blood.

4. Skimming the Surface

Using short strokes, and with your free hand pulling skin taut and flat, start your shave with the sideburns. Then move to the cheeks and neck. Finish with upper lip and chin last, since whiskers are heaviest in this area. Do not apply too much pressure—razor burn is no one’s friend.

5. Razor Sharp Approach

Rinse the blade under hot water before you begin to shave and after every few swipes—this removes shaving cream, whiskers and dead skin. Replace the blade every three to seven shaves. A dull blade will make your face feel scratchy and look blotchy.

6. Close Encounter

For an even closer shave, apply more shave cream and re-shave—again, with the grain.

7. Rubbed the Wrong Way

Rinse your face with cool water and pat dry with a towel. Never rub.

8. Non-Alcoholic, Please

Shaving can remove up to two layers of surface skin, which is why it is important to use a quality after-shave moisturizer. The best products replace lost moisture and soothe, cool and refresh the skin. Forget alcohol-heavy concoctions—they’re all pain, no gain.