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Lauren Taylor is about to have her eyebrows "threaded" at Bhavna Patel's shop at Valley Plaza.

A uni-brow's nemesis

Indian technique of threading offers new way for men, women to groom

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Call them "face framers," "fuzzy caterpillars" or the dreaded "uni-brow," but whatever nickname you give to eyebrows, one's things for sure — those two little tufts of facial hair just above the peepers require regular grooming, beauty experts say.

While waxing and/or tweezing brows is a commonplace practice among women — and men — a new shop in Bakersfield's Valley Plaza now offers "threading," a lesser known technique to shape and maintain eyebrows.

And though professional threading may be unique to this area, the method is far from new.

Threading is an ancient practice of removing facial hair using a strand of spe-



Bhavna Patel uses thread to remove and groom the eyebrows of Lauren Taylor at her shop in Valley Plaza.

The practitioner holds one end of the thread in his or her teeth and the other in the left hand; the middle of the thread is looped through the index and middle fingers of the right hand, allowing the loop to trap and yank out the unwanted hairs.

Threading can remove hair from brows, the upper lip or other facial areas.

Advocates say it's quick, relatively painless and, apparently, is becoming

in July, lines of customers have become so long, she uses a bakery-style counter that dispenses those pink, numbered tickets for more orderly service.

Threading — while prevalent in India, Asia and the Middle East as well as larger metropolitan areas like Los Angeles — is relatively rare here as far as licensed professionals, according to Pat Billings, the director of Lyle's Bakersfield College of Beauty.

THREADING:

Owner brings her expertise to shop

Continued from D1

through our school, but no, we don't teach threading here."

When her Indian students demonstrated the threading method to Billings, it was quite impressive, she said.

"It's really amazing to watch—such an art with very perfect results just from the thread," Billings said.

Like other beauty maintenance practices, such as hair color, manicures, etc., threading and henna tattooing may in fact take place in people's own homes in Bakersfield, being done by themselves or by a friend, Patel said.

"In India, it's common for sisters or mothers and daughters to do threading on each other," she said.

After arriving in Bakersfield with her husband, Nilesh Patel two years ago, Bhavna Patel hoped to introduce the threading method and henna tattooing to her new hometown in the professional sense. Previously, Patel operated a threading and henna salon in New Jersey for nearly 15 years.

It's her goal to offer Bakersfield residents another option for maintaining their beauty. She typically charges \$8 and up for threading; \$10 and up for henna tattoos. Hair care services are also available at Patel's.

If people prefer waxing or don't have any interest in henna tattoos, that's OK with Patel, too, she said.

"I just wanted to open a shop here in Bakersfield so people could see threading and see if it's something that they want to try," Patel said.

That's exactly what Lauren Taylor, now a regular client of Patel's, did.

"I just love how Bhavna can get my eyebrows to look so natural," said Taylor, who works at a department store makeup counter.

Since it had been several weeks since Taylor last visited Patel's, she looked forward to this day's appointment.

"I'm really wanting them done because I know they will look so much better," Taylor said.



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Lauren Taylor appears to like the results of eyebrow grooming called threading that she had done at Bhavna Patel's shop in the Valley Plaza.

As Patel moves the thread over Taylor's brows, fine hairs are removed while shaping also occurs.

"I like to follow the natural line of the brow and give the client a slight arch," Patel said.

Within minutes, Taylor is looking into a hand mirror and admiring her "cleaned-up" look.

Right after Taylor, another customer took a turn, though she was a first-timer for threading.

"I've never had this done before," said Ruth Mena, who also admitted she was just a little nervous.

Still, once Patel went to work on Mena's brows, any fears of the unknown were diminished.

"I'm fine—it doesn't hurt," said Mena during Patel's handiwork. "I can feel it, but it's not painful."

Again, when completed, the hand mirror is given to Mena, who is also pleased with the results.

For customer Gurdip Kaur, threading solves her sensitive skin problem.

"When I would have waxing done, I would get red, pimply bumps under my eyebrows because my skin is so sensitive," said Kaur, who has her brows threaded about every two weeks. "With threading, that doesn't happen for me."

Michelle Schreiber, owner of

Michelle Schreiber Skin Care located inside Salon Central on 19th Street in downtown Bakersfield, said that waxing eyebrows on people with sensitive skin can be successful.

It's a matter of choosing the proper type of wax for the client and inquiring if the client has had any past, negative experiences with waxing that might need special attention, according to Schreiber.

"That's the kind of question an esthetician should ask," she said.

Waxes with different bases, such as honey, green tea or cream, offer people different options that might work better for their skin type, Schreiber said. While Schreiber has yet to see an actual threading procedure firsthand, she has seen the results of the technique on people before, saying it appeared to provide a "clean, smooth brow just as waxing can."

"I think that between waxing and threading, it's really just a personal preference," she said.

Patel agreed, saying that whichever method people choose, maintaining well-groomed eyebrows can make a significant difference in one's appearance.

"The eyebrows say a lot about our faces, they can change how your whole face looks," she said.