

Laser Hair Removal Unwrapped

The laser has become a precision surgical instrument widely used for a variety of procedures. Most recently, lasers have been utilized for the quick, gentle removal of unwanted hairs. The laser works by sending a pulsating beam of light, of a particular wavelength to precise areas on the skin. The light passes directly through the skin, but is absorbed by the pigment in the hair follicle and shaft. Once absorbed by laser light, the follicles are impaired from future growth, and eventually die off. Laser hair removal has come a long way since the first laser for hair removal received FDA clearance in mid 1998. Older generation normal-mode ruby lasers were very slow, very painful and worked only on individuals with very dark hair and very light skin. Today, lasers can work on all skin colors and some lasers are even safe for treating tanned skin.

Lasers are not for everyone, and their proper use requires great skill, training and expertise. The laser technician at minimum must be a Certified Laser Specialist who has graduated from an accredited school for laser. Generally it is best to have a laser-trained dermatologist, or plastic surgeon perform the procedure, in case of complications. For the laser to be effective, the hair pigment must be darker than the surrounding skin pigment. If this is not the case, the treatment will not work and may have harmful complications. Additionally very darkly pigmented people absorb too much laser energy in their skin and are not ideal candidates. Tanned patients with light hair are not candidates either.

Light skin makes laser hair removal easier to perform. Fewer treatments are required, and better, faster results are obtained. People with darker skin can be treated, but results are slower, more sessions are required, and greater expertise is required on the part of the doctor. Coarse dark hair responds the best to laser treatment, light hair is more difficult to treat. Blonde or red hair is very difficult to treat, multiple treatment sessions are required, and results are variable. Laser hair removal must be individualized for each patient.

Although one laser session can produce impressive hair removal, generally, multiple treatment sessions are necessary to see optimal results. In large part this is due to the fact that laser hair removal is most effective for hair, which is in the growth phase. Since hair grows in cycles, not all of the hairs are in the growth phase at any given time. Additional sessions are necessary to catch all of the hairs when they are in this phase.

Any area, except adjacent to the eye, where there is excess hair can be treated. The most common areas requested are the face, upper lip, neck, chest, breast region, underarms, back, abdomen, bikini line, and legs.

The costs for a single laser hair removal treatment vary depending on the part of the country, and range from \$300.00 to \$500.00 per session. Consumers are advised, as with all forms of medical care, to seek the center of highest quality, rather than lowest cost. Laser hair removal requires a great deal of skill, individual attention, experience, and a trained, caring, professional staff.

After treatment, most patients have a mild sunburn-type sensation that fades in 2-3 hours. Moisturizers and/or cool compresses can help during this time. Small blister areas can be treated with topical antibiotic until resolved. Sun block should be used for up to 6 weeks after treatment if sun exposure is anticipated. No waxing, shaving, or dyeing should be performed for 2 weeks after treatment. Pretreatment restrictions are also applicable to the post treatment period.

It must be remembered that it is impossible to predict the exact result a patient will achieve with laser hair removal, especially with regard to how many sessions a given individual will require. The indication for laser hair removal is mostly subjective. A desire for hair removal is the only criterion for laser hair removal.

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