

## Is Laser Hair Removal Right For You?

Are you tired of shaving? Do you fear waxing or electrolysis? Is the removal of unwanted hair a part of your life that you wish you never had to think about again? You are not alone. In fact, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery 1,566,909 permanent hair removal procedures were performed in 2005. The secret that all of these people discovered last year was laser hair removal.

The use of lasers for medical procedures is nothing new. Lasers have been used for more than twenty years in our hospitals, surgery centers, and medical offices for surgical applications. For more than a decade now, lasers have also been in use for a variety of cosmetic services, including the reduction or removal of body and facial hair.

At first glance, the word laser brings about thoughts of futuristic science-fiction movies, but the reality is that the future is here. In a very simplified explanation of this technology, a laser or intense light source creates heat in an extremely precise and controlled manner in order to disable a hair follicle and inhibit its ability to grow. A laser can produce an output of light with very specific characteristics that cause it to be well absorbed by a hair follicle. The bi-product of light is heat, which, upon absorption by the hair and its supporting structures, destroys the follicle. Often a laser may cover an area of 9mm squared up to 50mm squared, allowing it to effect all of the hair follicles in a targeted area of the body.

Can I visit my doctor or local medical spa today and be hair-free tomorrow? No, your hair grows in cycles that rotate approximately every 28 days, and only hairs that are in the active growth phase can be appropriately affected. Laser hair removal can typically be accomplished after a series of anywhere from four to twelve sessions depending upon the effectiveness of the technology used by your practitioner. Hair colors and skin types also play a role. Fair skin and dark hair typically yield the most productive results, while darker skin and/or lighter hair have shown to be less affected by these methods.

The success of laser hair removal procedures are also highly influenced by the aptitude of the laser technician. This is where proper training and experience play an important role. Be sure to ask your provider why they are qualified to perform these procedures. Have they been specifically trained with regard to laser safety? Did they attend a professional training program? Nearly every medical spa or medical aesthetics practice is required to have a supervising physician if the laser operator is not a physician. What are the doctors qualifications?

It is also important to remember that this is not a one-size-fits-all service. Every individual person is different, and your skin and hair is as unique to you as all of your other physical characteristics. Make certain to ask for a patch test at the time of your consultation. A patch test involves the application of laser energy to a small area of the skin that allows you an opportunity to learn more about the sensation associated with the treatment, and to give you a chance to see how your skin and hair react to the treatment before you dive in head first.

Laser hair removal technologies can be a wonderful enhancement to our lives. If you ask the right questions so that you can make an informed decision about laser services, worrying about unwanted hair can be a thing of the past.

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### About the Author

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