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Summer Essentials - Part II
By Bir Ganguly

If you were told that humans have more hair follicles per square inch of the body than most higher primates, what would your reaction be? Disbelief, right? Well, my friend, it is a simple fact of life. However, the majority of the hair on our body is fine and light-colored. But that still leaves for a lot of hair that is coarse and dark, especially for us – the males of the species. On certain parts of the body, this can be more acceptable than on others, and even attractive on some places, depending on you and your partner's preferences. But on the back or on the shoulders/upper arms; or on the butt? The answer is a definite "no."

In the skin-baring spirit of summer, Beauty News scoured the length and breadth of the city to find some of the best permanent hair removal processes available and the fabulous technicians, in whom you can truly repose your trust. From a smattering of choices we picked four little gems from four different sections of the city to ensure that you never have to venture too far from where you live. We even went south of the 14th!

But first, let us talk about some of the nitty-gritty that you should know when considering permanent hair removal. Laser/pulsed-light based hair removal works by producing a beam of concentrated light for a fraction of a second at a time. The light is absorbed by the pigment in the hair follicle (but not by the skin) and turns into heat energy. This heat "kills" several follicles at one go. The length of a session can last between a few minutes to over an hour, depending on the size of the treatment area. The dead hair grows out and finally falls off in a couple of weeks in what is known as the "shedding" process. This way the hair is gone for good. Because the procedure tends to treat hair follicles that are in the active growth or anagen phase, more than one treatment are usually required to come totally clean. Treatments are typically done four to six weeks apart. On average, expect to undergo three to six treatments, depending on the area, the hair growth, and the technology used. It is, however, possible that you might be satisfied after just two treatments.

So, does it hurt? There is a slight tingling sensation and people, in general, tolerate the procedure well. Some describe it as a rubber-band snapping against the skin while others feel tiny ant-bites. Some areas of the body are more sensitive than others, and if needed, topical anesthesia is always an option. If you would prefer the treatment area to be numbed, make sure you discuss that with your esthetician beforehand and schedule an extra 40 minutes or so prior to the treatment.

Laser/pulsed-light based hair removal works best on fair skin with dark hair. However, with advancement in technology, the procedure can be effectively and safely employed on almost all skin tones today, including on darker and tanned skin. Working with true blond, grey, and red hair remains slightly more difficult and the results might be less impressive. Electrolysis is a more viable procedure in such cases, something we can take up on another day.

So, where are the happening places?

True to the “underground cool” credo of downtown, Body Beautiful Spa and Laser Center in the East Village is located in a basement and can be easy to miss. But you would do so at your own loss. Richard, the master laser technician here, has over a decade of experience and is one of the best at his craft. He uses the LightSheer Diode Laser which works with all skin tones and comes with a special contact-cooling hand-piece making it perfect for sensitive skin. The chosen area is shaved just prior to the treatment, and aloe gel is applied to the skin to soothe and provide lubrication for easy movement of the hand-piece against the skin. The laser pulses, disabling the hair follicles and preparing the hair to fall out within a few days to a week. After a series of treatments, a permanent reduction of between 75 and 95 percent is achieved. Some maintenance may be required once or twice a year for some minor sparse hairs that may come back. Body Beautiful Spa and Laser Center is located at 96 East 7th Street. You can make an appointment by calling 212.979.5515.

Located in the heart of Chelsea, Max Spa, is one of the most amazing in town with its theme rooms, such as, the exquisite Japanese Garden or the exotic Moroccan Room. Then, there is also the Blue Lagoon Room. Although your laser hair removal process will be conducted in a more clinical setting, you can always schedule a little something on the side to enjoy the special atmosphere of these spaces. As for the laser treatment at this spa, you cannot be in better hands. Gina, one of the two laser experts at max, totally rocks! She is highly experienced and knowledgeable and takes a truly in-depth approach. You are assured of the best attention. The laser that she uses is the SLP 1000 Diode Laser System from Palomar Medical Technologies. It is one of the most advanced systems on the market and can treat all skin types perfectly well. Gina applies a special technique as she works the laser – she treats the area from every direction to make for more efficient de-activation of the hair follicles. She also prefers to use topical anesthetic routinely which allows for more intense lasering without any increase in the discomfort level. Although the service at Max is slightly more expensive, you can achieve optimum results in comparatively fewer sessions. Max Spa and Laser Hair Removal is at 181 Seventh Avenue, between 20th and 21st streets. Dial 212.989.6555 to find out about Gina’s availability. Also, while there, try the special milk-based manicure. It is a total quickie and the results are beyond compare!

Smack in the heart of midtown east sits Smooth Synergy, a full-service cosmedical spa, which was our next stop. Here the technicians utilize two different kinds of lasers - the GentleLase Plus and the new Candela GentleYAG laser. The latter allows for safe, effective treatment of all skin types including summer tans and dark skin. GentleYAG lasers have the patented Dynamic Cooling Device that sprays the upper layers of skin with a fine mist of cryogen prior to each laser pulse. This cooling technology minimizes discomfort, protects the top layer of skin, and enables the laser energy to gently reach and treat hair follicles. Although the space has more of a no-frills, utilitarian appearance, the service is top-notch. We know for sure now what ‘shedding’ means! Estheticians are all certified and well experienced, but our favorite is Kyung. She will get you through no matter what – even if you picked a really tough area and decided to proceed, a bit foolhardily, without topical anesthesia. Smooth Synergy is located at 686 Lexington Avenue between 55th and 56th streets and can be reached at 212.397.0111 or www.smoothsynergy.com for appointment scheduling

Moving further uptown, we found Michelle Rosenthal at Completely Bare Spa’s Upper East Side location. Here hair removal is done using the Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) treatment which, like our three previous picks, delivers smooth skin to all complexions. The process calls for about six sessions for optimal results. The IPL machine is calibrated to your specific skin and hair type, body part, and quantity of hair. All of this happens on a computer screen that you can watch as you relax on the treatment station. Next, using an FDA-approved filter, the IPL uses short bursts of light to target the hair follicle and pigment affecting the hair shaft and root and causing hair re-growth to be finer and lighter. Also prior to the process, the treatment area is covered in a clear freezing gel to reduce any unpleasant sensation. In addition, Michelle will engage you in such interesting conversation as she expertly goes about with the procedure, that you will not feel a thing or the passing of time. Completely Bare Spa is located at 764 Madison Avenue between 65th and 66th Streets. To book an appointment with Michelle, contact the spa at 212.717.9300.



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