

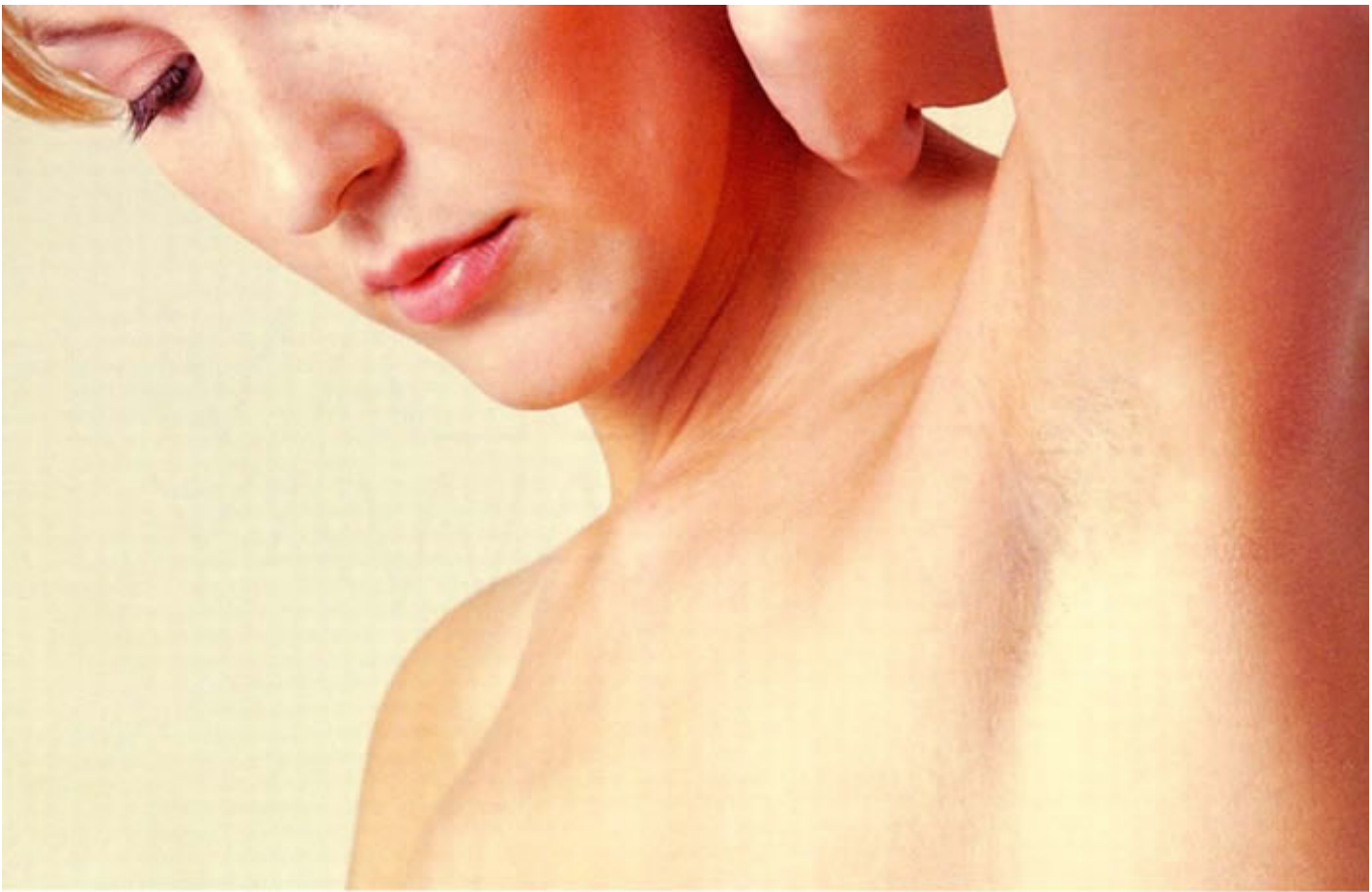
BEAM IT AWAY

LASER HAIR REMOVAL IN THE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE

WITH ALL THE current methods available for hair removal, it's hard to figure out which one is the most effective. There is electrolysis, waxing, depilatory creams, and of course, shaving. However, laser hair removal may be the best option for long-term or permanent results.

Laser hair removal uses laser light - an intense, pulsating light beam - to remove unwanted hair. The scientific principle behind lasers is fairly straightforward: Most of them create heat to eliminate unwanted hair. When the light from the laser comes into contact with the hair, the hair's pigment absorbs the light and turns it into heat. The heat then destroys the surrounding hair follicle, which prevents further growth. The procedure is generally performed over several sessions and can take place right in the doctor's office. ►

by George P Liakeas, M.D.



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What to expect

Reliable doctors will advise their patients on what to expect from laser treatments. The physician will explain the different options available, the procedure itself and its risks and limitations. Test patches may be performed to determine whether hair will respond favorably to the laser. Darker-skinned clients may be asked to use a bleaching cream on the area to be treated to help focus the laser's energy on the hair follicle instead of the skin.

The area to be treated will be shaved clean and an anesthetic cream will be applied to minimize discomfort. During the procedure, patients feel intense light emissions on the skin as hair follicles absorb the laser. Each laser

pulse lasts a fraction of a second and treats approximately a half-inch area. Many lasers are equipped with cooling systems to decrease skin temperature, which provides an additional mild anesthetic and prevents burns from the laser-generated heat.

The amount of hair the expert is able to remove depends on the type of laser used, which, in turn, depends on the patient's skin type and hair color. Depending on the type of laser used, hair can be removed from a small area, such as a chin, or a large area, such as an entire leg. Because the laser only removes hair that is in its growth phase, and not all hairs will be in this stage at the same time, it generally takes several treatments to get rid of all unwanted hair. The number of sessions needed varies for each individual. Typically, a series of five to eight sessions is usually recommended.

Laser hair removal can help to eliminate hair from just about anywhere on the body. Some of the most popular areas include the back, the bikini area, legs, face and chest.

Laser's edge

The hair does not have to be a particular length before it can be removed by lasers, unlike electrolysis and waxing. Electrolysis involves inserting a needle into the hair shaft with the intention of reaching the follicle. A small electrical charge is then sent to disable the follicle. Tweezers are then used to remove that particular hair. Hair removal with a laser is much faster as the laser is pulsed about once per second across the skin's surface. Electrolysis operators can only treat those visible hairs and those where the follicle is reachable through the shaft lasers treat any active follicle even if the hair has not yet reached skin's surface or if the hair shaft is not straight.

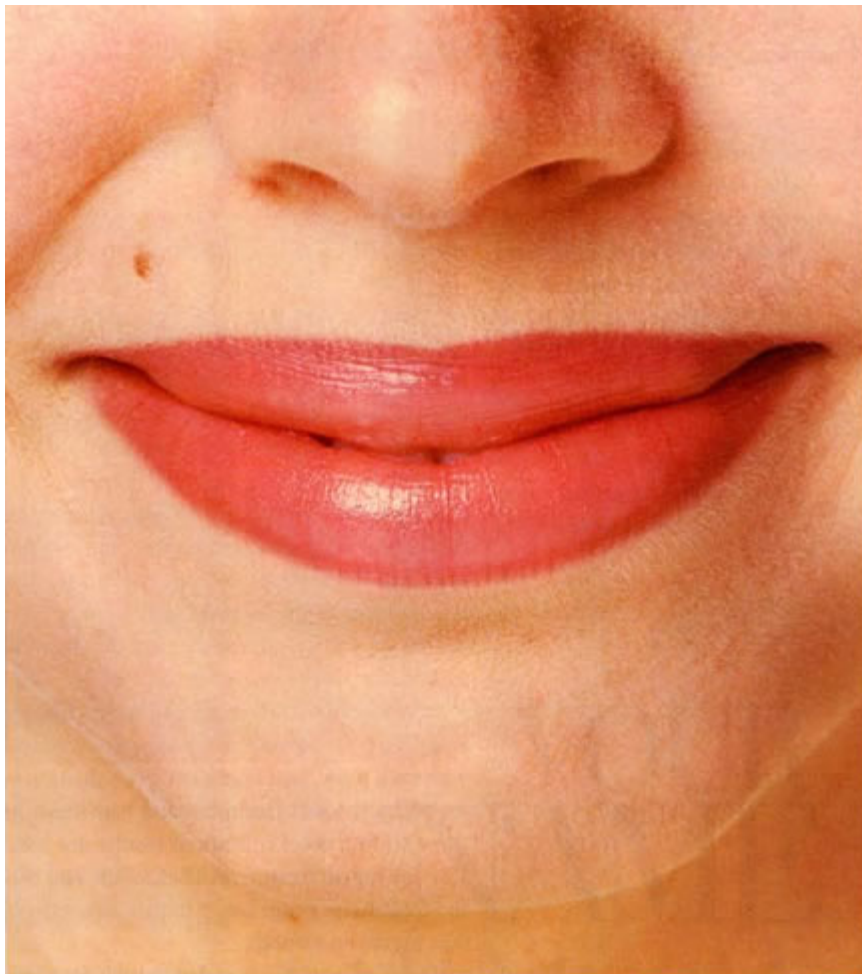
What's out there

Smooth Synergy Cosmedical Spa uses the GentleLase plus for laser hair removal. The GentleLase produces a highly concentrated light beam. Different lasers produce different colors of light. The pigment (melanin), located in hair follicles (melanin pigments give hair its color) and hair shaft, absorbs the Gentlelase's light. The laser pulses for a fraction of a second, just long enough to vaporize the pigment, disabling several hair follicles at a time to eliminate or significantly impede the hair's regrowth, but not long enough to damage the surrounding skin. The GentleLase's contact-cooling handpiece further protects the epidermis, the skin's upper layer. This patented "epidermal preservation" method allows delivery of more laser energy deeper into the hair follicle.

The GentleYag is another laser hair removal treatment that safely and effectively removes unwanted hair. This laser works well on all skin types, which include tanned and dark skin. Growing numbers of patients are requesting this service, and now, with the new Candela GentleYag laser, unwanted facial or body hair can be removed quickly and conveniently. GentleYag uses advanced, "gentle" laser technology, eliminating the pain and inconvenience of shaving, plucking or waxing unwanted hair. Typical applications for both female and male patients include face, underarms, bikini line, legs, back, chest, and private and sensitive areas. Laser treatments, even of large areas such as

continues

Each pulse, which lasts less than a second, produces a slight tingling feeling. In particularly sensitive areas, such as the upper lip, it may feel like a quick, light pinch



the legs, back or chest, take a fraction of the time of other hair removal methods. Only GentleYag lasers have the patented Dynamic Cooling Device (DCD) that sprays the skin's upper layers with a fine cryogen mist prior to each laser pulse. This exclusive cooling technology minimizes pain, protects the skin's top layer, and enables the laser energy to gently reach and treat hair follicles.

Smooth, hair-free skin doesn't come easy, and though several sessions are required to produce long-lasting results, laser hair removal is considered a good option for permanent hair removal.

Frequently asked questions

Some of the most common issues regarding laser hair removal involve the following concerns and questions:

1. Is laser hair removal permanent? The hair follicles that are targeted during each treatment are in their active growth phase. These follicles are permanently destroyed and unable to grow hair. Because hair grows in phases, the treatments reduces hair growth in the area over time.

2. How many sessions will it take to get smooth skin? The laser destroys hairs that are in the active growth phase, so repeat sessions are necessary to address hair that was not treated during previous treatments. Each treatment will see reduction in the amount of hair. Clients will need about six treatments to get the optimum results.

3. What body parts are not recommended for laser hair removal? Body openings such as the ear canal, nasal passages and areas near the eyes, are the only places not recommended for laser hair removal treatments.

4. How long does a patient wait in between treatments? Anywhere from seven to 13 weeks.

5. How long will it take to see results? Laser treatment has been proven effective for hair removal with each individual treatment. So, reduction is seen after the first treatment and hair sheds in three to four weeks. Marked results are seen after the fourth treatment. Then, at the end of a six-treatment program, patients can expect skin to remain smooth.

6. Does it hurt? Each pulse, which last less than a second, produces a slight tingling feel-

ing. In particularly sensitive areas, such as the upper lip, it may feel like a quick, light pinch.

7. What are the possible side effects? Rarely there can be temporary scabbing, blistering or crusting of the skin, or transient change in pigmentation, which will eventually fade.

8. Is there any downtime after the procedure? Any redness or swelling? The energies used for laser (electrical and light) are both commonly used in a range of medical and cosmetic procedures that have proven to be safe. Most people experience no side effects at all, though few exhibit some short-term local reddening of the surrounding skin. Patients can return to your regular activities immediately after treatment, although it is advisable to keep the skin protected from direct sunlight for a short period of time.

9. Is laser hair removal for everyone? It is important that the treatment is customized to exactly match a patient's hair and skin color and type. As long as there is some color in hair (even blonde hair has enough color), then laser treatments will be effective.

The final frontier ... almost

Zapping away hair may seem like a panacea for many. It is a sound therapy with results that can be profound in many individuals. Unfortunately, it still requires more than one treatment to be completely effective and it is not without its problems. Nevertheless, it is a popular service. Smooth, hair-free skin doesn't come easy, and though several sessions are required to produce long-lasting results, laser hair removal is considered a good option for permanent hair removal. ■

George P. Liakeas M.D., is a board-certified family physician who has his own practice in Manhattan, and is an associate professor at New York Medical College. He performs injectable treatments and is the medical director and serves as a medical consultant for Smooth Synergy Cosmedical Spa in New York City, a full-service medical spa. For more information, call (212) 397-0111 or visit www.smoothsynergy.com

