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### **How does laser hair removal work?**

The laser puts out very short pulses of intensely bright light. This light penetrates into the skin and is absorbed by hairs that are brown or black. When absorbed, the light energy is converted into heat and the hair and the cells from where the hair is growing (hair follicle) are heated. The heating causes damage to the hair follicle

Almost all of the treated hair falls out within 1 to 2 weeks with traditional laser hair removal. After 6 weeks to 6 months there is gradual regrowth of some of the hair. There is usually less of it than before and often the hair is usually thinner and somewhat lighter in color.

### **What areas can be treated**

Any area that has unwanted hair. However, the hair has to be some shade of black or brown for the laser to be effective. Patients with blond, red and white hair do not respond well with traditional laser hair removal. For such patients, we offer a radiofrequency/intense pulsed light ("RFL") system which is FDA approved for the treatment of patients with light hair. Eyelashes cannot be treated with the laser because of the risk of eye injury by the laser light.

### **Is the laser treatment painful?**

With each laser pulse, there is a moderate stinging sensation, which lasts for a few seconds. In order to reduce the discomfort, the skin is cooled with iced gel prior to treatment. In addition, for the treatment of sensitive areas, a topical anesthetic can be applied to the treatment area 1 hour before laser treatment and reduce the amount of swelling. A repeated application ½ hour prior to treatment increases the effectiveness of topical anesthesia. After treatment there is some stinging that feels similar to sunburn. Patients can usually resume normal activities right away.

### **What will happen after treatment?**

There is often swelling and redness in the treatment area that subsides over 1 to 3 days but may last up to 1 week. Fine scabs may form around the hair follicle openings where the hairs come out of the skin. Infrequently, some of the treated areas develop blisters that resolve over

about one week. The hair is usually shed over 1 to 2 weeks, but may take up to one month.

### **How Long Does the Benefit Last?**

The temporary hair loss lasts from 6 weeks to 6 months. After every treatment, some of the hair usually does not grow back. If a hair has not grown back after 6 months, it usually means that that hair follicle will no longer produce hair.

As a general guideline, 80 % of patients will achieve a 20% long-lasting reduction in hair growth after a laser treatment. In addition, the regrowing hair is usually lighter and finer than the hair that preceded it. Patients with dark hair and fair skin seem to respond the best to laser hair removal, although we are able to treat all skin types and all hair colors with the various lasers offered at the Laser and Dermatologic Surgery Center.

### **What are possible side effects?**

Serious complications after laser hair removal have not been reported. The most common side effects are brownish discoloration or a lightening of the skin color in the treated areas. This is most often seen in patients that have relatively dark complexion and in patients that have a tan or go out in the sun soon after laser treatment. Fortunately, these color changes are usually temporary, resolving spontaneously over 3 to 12 months. Scarring has not yet been reported after laser hair removal.

Occasionally, a superficial burn similar to a sunburn can occur. It may appear as a small blister over a small portion of the treated area and heals within 7 to 10 days.

Some patients fail to achieve prolonged hair reduction with all of the hair regrowing after each treatment.

### **How much will it cost?**

The cost of the treatments varies depending on how large an area is to be treated. We will be happy to discuss treatment cost in advance of treatment. Insurance reimbursement is not available for laser hair removal.

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## **BEFORE TREATMENT**

1. **Do not** use aspirin or aspirin containing medications for at least *2 weeks* before treatment. Do not take **Advil** or **ibuprofen**-containing medications for *3 days* before treatment. **Tylenol** is an acceptable alternative if pain medication is needed. Aspirin increases the risk of bruising at the treatment site.
2. The treatment area has to be free of any tan. Sun avoidance and the use of sun blocks at least *six weeks* before treatment is recommended as a suntan increases the risk of side effects and decreases the effectiveness of treatment.
3. Avoid waxing, electrolysis and plucking of the hairs for 4-6 weeks before treatment, as the laser needs to have a hair in the hair follicle in order for the treatment to be effective.
4. Shaving, bleaching and the use of chemical depilatories is acceptable in the 6 weeks before treatment.
5. Shave the hair in the proposed treatment area on the morning of the laser treatment.
6. If you have a history of cold sores near the area to be treated, you may be prescribed a medication to prevent a cold sore from developing. Take the prescription as recommended.

## **AFTER TREATMENT**

1. Return to normal activities right away.
2. No special wound care is usually needed. Ice packs during the *first few hours* may provide relief from any residual stinging/burning that you may experience.
3. If significant blistering and/or scabbing develops, apply a thin coat of **Aquaphor Healing Ointment** to the scabs *twice-a-day*. Do not pick off any scabs that may form. Let them separate on their own. Please call our office if you experience these symptoms.
4. It may take *a week or more* for the hair to be shed. During this time it may appear that the hair is still growing. For patients receiving the RFL treatment, it may take 2-4 weeks for the hair to be shed.
5. The laser treatments are most effective when hair is in the early part of its growth cycle. Therefore, the best time for repeat treatments is soon after the hair has started to grow back. The average is 6-12 weeks between treatments.

For **emergencies** at night or during the weekend, call (314) 878-3839, leave a message and the doctor will contact you shortly thereafter.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our office:

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