



Laser Hair Removal Frequently Asked Questions

Imagine never shaving, waxing, plucking or applying messy creams again. Sound like a dream? Blair Plastic Surgery's Centre for Cosmetic Medicine has been making this a reality since 1997. Hundreds of their patients across central Pennsylvania have benefited from this quick and effective procedure. To help our readers get a better understanding of the treatment process and expectations for laser hair removal, Dr. Fanny Louton recently sat down with us and answered our questions about this increasingly popular and effective treatment.

Q How long has laser hair removal been around?

A Well, lasers in some form have been used for hair removal since the late 1960's, although it really wasn't until the mid-1990's that intense-pulsed light (IPL) and laser systems became more effective for long-term hair reduction. Some of those earlier lasers were only safe to use on those with light skin and dark hair. In addition, they weren't very effective overall. Now we have laser devices that can safely and effectively treat unwanted hair on even the darker skin types.

Q How does the laser remove hair?

A The laser emits a beam of light that is attracted to the pigment (or melanin) in the hair follicle. For a hair follicle to be affected by the laser, it must be in an actively growing phase. Only about 15 to 30% of your hair follicles are active at any one time. Therefore, you will need multiple treatments (usually between 4-6) to get the permanent hair reduction you desire. The laser beam is directed at and absorbed by the active hair follicles, disabling their growth and resulting in safe and effective hair reduction.

Q What is the advantage of using a laser?

A Lasers are precise instruments that can be adjusted to the exact parameters that will specifically disable the hair follicle. The laser uses a wide beam that treats many hairs at once instead of treating hair-by-hair like electrolysis. Because of this, large

areas such as your legs, arms, or back can be treated in a relatively short period of time. You will see results that last far longer than tweezing, waxing, shaving, chemical depilation, or other temporary methods.

Q What does the laser treatment feel like?

A The laser pulses do have a prickly, stinging sensation to them. Some people have likened the pulses to a rubber band slap against the skin. We utilize lasers that have a chilled tip so it keeps the skin cool, thereby helping offset some of the discomfort. Most of our clients are able to tolerate the treatment without any difficulty and I, I have had multiple treatments and fared just fine. However, since every person's level of sensitivity is different, we will always do a small test area prior to treatment so the patient can determine whether or not to undergo their first treatment.

Q What happens to the skin after laser treatment?

A Reddening and some minor swelling of the skin are the expected local reactions. They usually subside within a few minutes to a few hours and return to normal. Since the laser is not invasive in any way, no bandages are necessary. You are able to re-apply your make-up, return to work, and continue with your normal daily activities immediately following treatment.

Q How many laser treatments do most people need?

A It has been our experience most of our patients are able to discontinue treatments, knowing that they will probably need an occasional touch-up, after about 4-6 treatments. This is provided that the recommended treatment schedule is followed. It is also important to understand that results may vary depending on an individual's hair type, stress levels, current medications, and different hormone levels.

Keep in mind that some individuals will require fewer treatments, and some will require more treatments, depending on the results desired.

Q Is laser hair removal permanent?

A In short, no. The FDA has cleared laser hair removal, regardless of the laser, for "Permanent Hair Reduction" only. Based on our experience, we see about a 75-90% reduction in the treated area. The hair that remains is usually lighter and finer than was originally present. Still, each individual's treatment response may be different due to hair or skin type. It's important to understand that we have hundreds of follicles per square inch of our bodies and it is virtually impossible to affect every hair follicle in a given area. Many of these follicles are dormant at the time of a particular treatment and perhaps throughout the entire treatment process. We have no way of knowing if and when they may start growing due to stress levels, certain medications and differing hormone levels throughout your life. If you follow the treatment protocol as we describe, you can expect a significant reduction in hair for the treated area.

Q What should someone expect after a laser treatment?

A After your initial treatment, you should enjoy a significant reduction of hair. However, it will take 1-2 weeks for the treated hair to "push" its way to the surface and fall out. With each subsequent treatment, the hair in the actively growing phase will be effectively treated.

Follow up appointments are scheduled at about 6-8 week intervals. With that in mind, remember the importance of maintaining your follow up appointments.

Q What if someone has gray, white, blonde, red, or light fine hair?

A Since the laser is attracted to the pigment in the hair follicle, these hair colors may not have enough pigment to be successfully treated with the laser. If this applies to you, we may want to try a test spot to see if your hair responds to the laser.

Q What is the cost of laser hair removal?

A The cost varies depending on the area we are treating. At our office, the cost ranges from \$125.00 - \$300.00 per treatment. We also offer cost saving packages to make it more affordable to our patients since multiple treatments are required for best possible results.

Dr. Fanny Louton is a family practitioner and the Director of Blair Plastic Surgery's Centre for Cosmetic Medicine. In addition to her medical degree, Dr. Louton also holds a Masters in Public Health (MPH) and has extensive training in laser operations and medical skin care. Laser hair removal is available at both office locations, Altoona and State College. For more information, please call 949-7280 or 234-1420.

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FANNY LOULTON MD
949-7280/234-1420
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