

## **Laser Hair Reduction/Removal (Unwanted Hair Removal)**

### **How does Laser treatment differ from electrolysis?**

The main difference between *Laser treatment* and *electrolysis*, the traditional method, is Lasers treat multiple hair follicles at one time. There is no longer a need to identify and probe each individual hair follicle, as is done with electrolysis. Most patients need an average of three to five Laser sessions for an initial treatment series. Hair grows in cycles and subsequent treatments are necessary to treat the follicles that are lying dormant below the surface of the skin. Dormant follicles contain little pigment and are often not affected by initial treatment. Therefore, best results are obtained with multiple treatments.

### **What is the advantage of using a Laser?**

Unlike precision “hair-by-hair” treatments like electrolysis, the Laser uses a wide beam, which treats many hairs at once. Large areas, such as a man's full back, full legs or arms can be effectively treated within an hour. Immediate results will last far longer than shaving, tweezing, waxing, chemical depilation, or other temporary treatments.

### **How does the Laser actually work to remove hair?**

Most Lasers emit light that is absorbed by the pigment located in the hair follicle. Lasers have a dynamic cooling device to protect the skin surface. The Laser is pulsed, or “turned on,” for only a fraction of a second. The wavelength of light, duration of the pulses, and the amount of energy delivered has been carefully determined so that the energy will be absorbed by the hair follicle to disable it, but not long enough that excess heat is transferred to the surrounding skin. The result is safe and effective hair reduction and removal.

### **What types of Lasers are available at Pima Dermatology?**

We currently have three distinct Lasers for Laser Hair Removal: the **Lightsheer**, the **GentleMAX**, and the **GentleYAG**. The **GentleMAX** or **Lightsheer** Laser can be used for patients with fine hairs and fair skin types. The **GentleYAG** Laser can effectively treat darker or tanned skin. During the patient consultation, we will discuss the best Laser for individual hair and skin type to achieve optimal results.

### **Who are the best candidates for Laser Hair Removal?**

Since light energy is absorbed by the pigment melanin, which is then transformed into heat energy to disable the follicle, individuals with course, dark hair and light skin color respond best. In patients with darker skin color (more melanin in the skin), the skin tends to compete with the hair for the light energy, resulting in the potential for damage to the skin, not the follicle. The competition for the light energy between skin and hair melanin is why tanning should be avoided before and after Laser treatments.

### **Which areas can be treated?**

Nearly any body or facial hair can be treated, including large areas such as backs and chests, thighs and legs, bikini areas, face, and underarms.

### **What preparation is needed before Laser treatment?**

Tanning should be avoided. Self-tanning bronzers should also be avoided (stop use at least 10 days prior to Laser treatment). Waxing, plucking, and bleaching should be avoided for a minimum of two weeks prior to treatment. A patient is advised to trim or shave the hairs in the area to be treated the day before the treatment. In fact, it is best to freshly shave or clip the hairs in the area being treated just prior to treatment. A topical anesthetic may be recommended prior to treatment.

**How long will a treatment session take?**

Different Lasers treat hairs at different speeds. Since Lasers treat many hairs at a time, facial areas (chin, lip, cheeks, etc.) can usually be treated in less than 15 minutes. Small body areas (underarms, bikini line, etc.) take less than 30 minutes. Larger body areas (full back, full legs, both arms, etc.) can take longer, depending on the size of the area, the density of the hair, and the speed of the Laser.

**Is treatment painful?**

Most Laser patients describe the treatment as mildly uncomfortable, but not painful. It is likened to a pricking sensation or a “rubber band snap.” For sensitive or extensive facial and body areas, some patients may use a topical anesthetic.

**What will I look like after the treatment?**

Within several minutes of the treatment, the area will usually become slightly red and puffy. This reaction soon subsides and within a few hours the area returns to normal. The Laser does not burn or cut the skin in any way, so no bandages are necessary. Patients can return to your normal activities immediately. If redness persists, it usually fades within 24 – 48 hours. At the time of treatment, many of the hairs are removed; other hairs are shed within 1 – 2 weeks.

**What should I avoid after treatment?**

Sun exposure and tanning should be avoided. This can be accomplished by the use of a broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA/UVB). The treated areas should be handled gently, avoiding the use of abrasive cleansers or topical acne preparations. Ice compresses can be used to minimize swelling. If blistering occurs, a topical antibiotic such as Bactroban (a prescription antibiotic available as a cream or an ointment) can be applied. Most patients experience no noticeable after-effects following Laser treatment.

**How many treatments are needed?**

Several treatments are recommended to effectively treat hairs as they cycle through their active growth phase. Hairs will usually enter a growth spurt after about two months but the time interval may vary with the area(s) treated. Subsequent retreatments may be needed to keep up with any new finer hairs that have regrown. It is important to note that the following factors can influence regrowth and responsiveness to Laser therapy: hair location or hair type, hair color, hair density, skin color, hormonal influences, medications, and genetic background.

**What are the adverse effects of Laser treatment?**

Some degree of redness or swelling may occur but usually does not persist much beyond a few hours to a few days. Occasionally blisters can develop and, extremely rarely, scarring or infection can occur. The darker a patient’s skin color is, the higher the risk for changes in skin color, hypo or hyperpigmentation. Typically any changes in skin color will fade over time, but permanent discoloration is a very remote possibility. It is important to note that some of these adverse effects occur more often with electrolysis, waxing or shaving.

**Are there any patients that cannot be treated?**

Laser treatments are most effective in patients who are not tanned. Therefore, tanned individuals should wait until their tan has faded before seeking treatment. Patients with extremely dark skin color may find treatment less effective and run the risk of greater pigmentation changes. Hairs that are non-pigmented, grey, white or very fine and wispy, may not respond well to treatment. An area with an active infection, (i.e. a cold sore), should not be treated until the infection has healed. For best treatment results, it is important to avoid tanning both immediately before and following Laser treatments.

**If you have further questions or want to schedule a consultation or treatment for Laser hair removal or other cosmetic services, please contact our office at (520) 795-7729.**

**Please also visit our website at [www.pimaderm.com](http://www.pimaderm.com) for more information.**