

# Laser Hair Removal

Krauss Dermatology, Wellesley, MA

## 1. What is laser hair removal?

Laser hair removal uses bursts of light to selectively destroy hair follicles while leaving surrounding skin unharmed. Long lasting results are achieved much faster than with electrolysis, eliminating the need for frequent waxing, plucking and shaving. Razor bumps (psudofolliculitis) are both treated and prevented.

## 2. How many treatments will I need?

After each treatment, much of the hair will fall out within 2 weeks. Approximately one-third of the hair follicles, which were actively growing, will have been destroyed in most patients. The other hairs, which were in the resting stage, will begin actively growing back over the next 4 to 8 weeks. It is best to schedule your next treatment during this growing phase. With each treatment, the number of hairs that grow back will decrease, because each time, a fraction of the remaining hair follicles are destroyed. Most patients require a minimum of 4 treatments for long-term results and up to 6 or 8 treatments to achieve the best results possible. Unfortunately, laser hair removal is considered cosmetic and is not covered by insurance.

## 3. How long will the effects last?

Because laser hair removal has only been around a few years, no one can say exactly how long results will last. Near total hair removal in many patients has lasted many years. Data suggests that permanent hair reduction is likely in most patients. Hairs that are not destroyed become finer and lighter in color. This leads to further visible improvement in hair bearing areas and eliminates razor bumps (pseudofolliculitis). Approximately 5-10% of patients do not achieve lasting results with laser hair removal.

## 4. Does laser hair removal hurt?

We use a cooling gel and cold air anesthesia on each area during treatment. There is a stinging sensation with each pulse of the laser. A topical numbing cream may decrease discomfort from the procedure. Topicalaine, a very effective anesthetic gel, may be purchased in our office. Alternatively, LMX 4 or 5% cream (slightly more expensive than Topicalaine) may be ordered from your pharmacy without a prescription. Apply a generous amount of Topicalaine or LMX 30 minutes before your appointment and rub into the skin. Repeat this application after you check in for your appointment. In the bikini area or legs, plastic wrap may be used over the numbing cream to keep it in place and increase penetration into the skin. **No more than a single 30 gram tube should be used in any given day to avoid the danger of lidocaine toxicity.**

## 5. Am I a good candidate for laser treatment?

The best results are achieved in patients with dark hair and light skin. Blond, gray and white hair does not respond to treatment. A variety of skin types may be treated with our laser, including Asian and Mediterranean tones, but a gentler energy must be employed, requiring more treatments for improvement. Patients with a tan must wait at least 6 weeks for the tan to fade prior to treatment.

## 6. What are the risks?

Laser hair removal is extremely safe, with infrequent occurrence of side effects. Laser light cannot penetrate the skin and cannot harm internal organs, but goggles must be worn to protect the eyes. Patients with darker skin and those with a tan are at higher risk for skin darkening (hyperpigmentation) and lightening (hypopigmentation). These changes in color usually fade with time. Blistering or scarring occur only rarely. To minimize the possibility of these adverse events, it is important to follow pre and post procedure instructions.

# ***Patient Instructions for Laser Hair Removal***

Krauss Dermatology, Wellesley, MA

## **Pre-Treatment Instructions**

1. Avoid the sun for at least 6 weeks before and after your treatment. Do not use artificial tanners during the week prior to laser hair removal.
2. Avoid plucking, waxing and electrolysis for 3 weeks prior to treatment. These methods remove hair by the roots. If there are no hair roots to absorb the laser energy, the treatment will be less effective. Bleaching and chemical depilatories (Nair) should also be avoided for 2 weeks prior to treatment. Shaving or cutting hair is permitted.
3. Shave the area to be treated the day before your appointment. Longer hair will get in the way of the laser and cause increased discomfort.
4. If you are having laser hair removal on the face, and you have a history of cold sores or blisters around the mouth or lips (herpes infection), inform your doctor. You will need to take prescription antiviral medications on the day of your treatment.
5. A topical numbing cream may decrease discomfort from the procedure. Topicaine, a very effective anesthetic gel, may be purchased in our office. Alternatively, LMX 4 or 5% cream (which is slightly more expensive than Topicaine) may be ordered from your pharmacy without a prescription. Apply a generous amount of Topicaine or LMX 30 minutes before your appointment and rub into the skin. Repeat this application after you check in for your appointment. **No more than a single 30 gram tube should be used in any given day to avoid the danger of lidocaine toxicity.**

## **Post-Treatment Instructions**

1. Redness and irritation may be present for hours or even a few days. Use a mild cleanser to gently wash the area (such as Cetaphil liquid cleanser). One percent hydrocortisone cream (over the counter) can be used to alleviate itching. If blistering, oozing or crusting occurs, apply Vaseline jelly and contact us.
2. Makeup may be used if the treated area is red, but should be avoided if the area is uncomfortable or the skin is not intact.
3. The treated area must be carefully protected from the sun for at least 6 weeks after treatment. Sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher (preferably containing titanium dioxide or zinc oxide), as well as a hat or protective clothing is imperative. Sun exposure will increase the chance of discoloration.
4. Schedule your treatments at regular intervals approximately 4 to 8 weeks apart for best results.
5. Hair will remain in the follicles about 2 weeks, then often falls out. The area may be shaved during this period as long as the treated area is not irritated.