



Laser Hair Removal



Changi
General Hospital

SingHealth

Why do I have excessive hair?

- ➔ For most people, having excessive hair is due to hereditary factors, this means that it is more common in certain ethnic groups or certain families. There is no underlying medical cause for excessive hair growth.
- ➔ Rarely, excessive hair may be due to underlying medical problems. Medical conditions with hormonal disturbances resulting in extra hair growth may also be associated with weight gain, deepening of voice and menstrual irregularities.
- ➔ Occasionally, excessive hair growth may be due to medical and surgical treatments. Certain medications such as ciclosporin A may cause excessive hair growth as a side effect. Surgery involving tissue grafting may result in excessive hair due to the use of hairy grafts.
- ➔ Your dermatologist will go through your medical history and perform a thorough examination to diagnose your condition.

Should I remove these excessive hair?

The excessive hair can be left alone. However, for some people, this may cause social embarrassment and psychological distress, therefore they would prefer to remove the excessive hair. Others prefer to remove them for cosmetic reasons.



How can the excessive hair be removed?

There are various methods available for hair removal. The temporary methods remove the hair shafts but leave the hair follicles and hair roots intact. Common methods include shaving, waxing, application of depilatory cream and plucking. Recently a new cream (eflornithine cream) that slows hair growth is reported to help women with unwanted facial hair. With temporary methods, hairs will eventually grow from the hair follicles again and the process needs to be repeated indefinitely.

Other methods include the removal of hair shafts and also result in the destruction of hair follicles and roots. In the past, electrolysis was used. However, in recent years, laser hair removal has emerged as a better method.

For laser hair removal, an intense light source of a specific wavelength heats up and destroys the hair follicle selectively. The special light is absorbed by pigments within the follicle and the heat generated, “burns” the hair follicle without causing much injury to the surrounding tissue.

Do lasers work wonders for hair removal?

Lasers DO

- ➔ Cause selective destruction of hair follicles.
- ➔ Achieve satisfactory long-term hair reduction after several treatment sessions.
- ➔ Cause some minor side effects such as swelling and pigmentation of the skin in a minority of patients, especially those with darker skin.

Lasers DO NOT

- ➔ Achieve permanent hair destruction after one single treatment.
- ➔ Work equally well for all patients. Different laser systems work differently for patients with different skin types. Generally, patients with dark hair and fair skin respond better.

What are the precautions for laser hair removal?

Before the laser treatment, you should:

- ➔ Avoid waxing and plucking of hairs for two weeks.
- ➔ Avoid excessive sun exposure, four weeks before treatment. Recent sun tanning may cause an adverse response to the laser.
- ➔ Have a light shave one to two days before the day of laser treatment.
- ➔ Consume any medications prescribed for you. Sometimes antiviral medications may be needed when treating certain body areas such as the upper lip or bikini lines in patients with past history of herpes infection. Bleaching agents may be prescribed for patients with very dark skin.

After the laser treatment, you should:

- ➔ Take the prescribed medication (if any) and complete the course of treatment.
- ➔ Continue to protect yourself from the sun.
- ➔ Take good care of the treated sites. Your dermatologist may prescribe some ointments to soothe the skin and to prevent skin infection.



What can I expect from my laser treatment?

- ➔ Several sessions of treatment are needed to achieve significant hair reduction.
- ➔ The treated areas may not be completely empty after the laser treatment. However, the remaining hairs may be lighter in colour and finer in texture.
- ➔ There may be a small risk of brownish pigmentation of the skin after the laser treatment, but this will usually clear up with time if you protect yourself from the sun.





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