

HAIR REMOVAL & REDUCTION

WHAT IT IS

Removal of unwanted body hair is a common practice in both women and men. There are many different methods of removing unwanted hair — temporarily or permanently. The effort and expense of these treatments can vary significantly, as does the rate of successful hair removal.

HAIR REMOVAL METHODS

TOPICAL

Over-the-counter depilatory products or hair removal creams are available without a prescription, and should be used as directed because misuse can burn the skin. It's important to do a patch test before using a depilatory cream to test for any type of skin irritation or intolerance.

PROCEDURAL

Shaving is the most popular hair removal method among men and women. It is inexpensive, fast, convenient and relatively painless. However, the possibility of nicks, cuts, fast regrowth and ingrown hairs has prompted consumer demand for smoother, long-lasting results.

For best results with shaving, the following can be helpful:

- Wet skin before shaving. Dry shaving can increase risks of cuts and ingrown hairs.
- Use a shaving cream or gel.
- Shave only in the direction of hair growth.
- Avoid going back and forth in two or more directions over shaved sites.
- Store your razor in a dry area.



Threading is a method of hair removal originating in Asia, now popular in Western countries. In threading, a thin (cotton or polyester) thread is doubled, then twisted. It is then rolled over areas of unwanted facial hair, plucking the hair at the follicle level. Threading can be more painful than waxing but the effect lasts for six to 10 weeks.

Waxing involves applying a layer of melted wax to skin, then pulling it off quickly in the opposite direction to hair growth. This pulls hair out by the root and thus slows hair regrowth, which may occur after two to three weeks depending on the individual. Both warm and cold wax techniques are available, but extra caution is necessary with warm wax to ensure it is not so hot that it burns skin.

Sugaring is similar in its process to waxing. It consists of a soft paste that is applied to skin at the site of desired hair removal, then pulled off.

Electrolysis is the only hair removal method that can permanently remove hair. This method of hair removal can be used in patients of all skin colours. The process involves the insertion of a small, fine needle into the hair follicle, followed by use of a small electrical current to damage and then destroy the follicle.

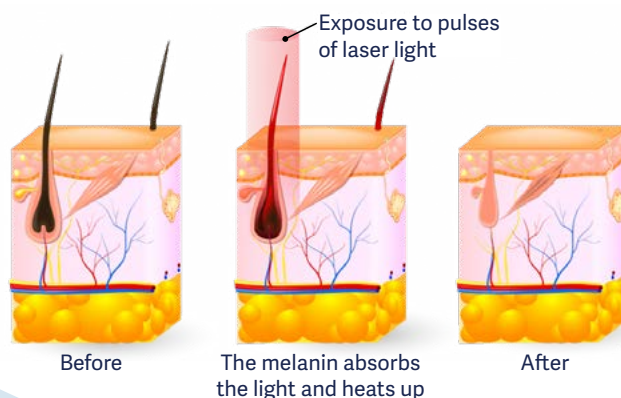
Intense pulsed light (IPL) machines use a highly concentrated beam of light, often in conjunction with a cream or gel, to burn the hair shaft. IPLs produce a wide bandwidth of light that can heat all the surrounding tissue, making it less effective in disrupting hair growth and a higher risk for burns, especially on darker skin.

Risks of IPL include eye injury, skin pigmentation changes, scarring, and paradoxical hair stimulation. Given the significant risk of injury, it is advisable to undergo this procedure after consultation with a dermatologist, or under a dermatologist's supervision.

Laser hair removal consists of using a targeted laser beam to penetrate and destroy hair follicles that produce hair. Results can last three to six months or longer before hair grows back visibly. A series of six to eight treatments, spaced eight to 12 weeks apart, is usually required for permanent results.

Potential side-effects include blistering, skin discolouration, redness, swelling and scarring. Pigmentation problems, such as white spots where lasering has occurred, tend to be a greater risk with tanned or darker skin. Due to the significant risks involved in laser hair removal, it is advised to undergo this procedure after consultation with a dermatologist, or under a dermatologist's supervision.

Laser Hair Removal



HAIR REDUCTION METHODS

TOPICAL

Eflornithine hydrochloride works by blocking an enzyme that stimulates hair growth. Eflornithine HCl cream has been shown to slow the rate of growth, and is approved as a prescription cream to reduce unwanted facial hair in women. In some patients, the cream can cause acne, folliculitis, stinging or burning of the skin, redness or skin irritation.

ORAL

Spironolactone is a diuretic (water pill) that can be used to lower blood pressure. In dermatology, it is used in certain situations to block androgen (male hormone) activity, which is normally produced in all women in low levels. Higher androgen levels in women can cause acne and unwanted facial or chest hair.



Additional information on Hair Removal & Reduction is available online.

DERMATOLOGY.CA

