

What is laser hair removal and how does it work?

In its simplest forms, the goal of laser hair removal is to selectively heat a target (hair) to the point of destruction without damaging the surrounding tissue (skin). Lasers work by delivering an intense beam of light that is absorbed by the skin. This light is converted to heat and is absorbed by the hair follicles, while leaving the skin unaffected. By repetitively hitting the hair follicles over a course of several treatments, typically 6-12, around 80+% of the follicles will be disabled to the point that they can no longer produce hairs.

Does it hurt?

Some clients may feel a slight discomfort with each laser pulse, sometimes described as the snapping of a rubber band on the skin. This discomfort resolves in several seconds and is minimized by the short burst of cold cryogen gas that the laser emits. Pain threshold, as many other biological responses, varies immensely from individual to individual. Beam has clients that literally fall asleep during the treatments, while others are more sensitive. For the sensitive clients, Beam tries to make their treatment as comfortable as possible by either using lower settings (more treatments may be required), slower pulsing rate, or by breaking up long treatments into several different appointments. Regardless, when our clients start noticing the results and the improvement of their skin texture, decreased hair density, lack of in-growns, any discomfort associated with the treatments becomes very much worth it!

How many treatments will I need?

Clients are attracted to laser hair removal because it is quick and total areas can be effectively treated in 6-12 treatments*, spaced 4 to 12 weeks apart, depending on the area of the body that is being treated. Usually faces are treated in shorter intervals, and body areas are typically treated 6-12 weeks apart.

* It should be said that the average number of treatments needed is 6-12 per area treated. There is however, a variation from person to person depending on many factors, such as genetics, darkness and thickness of the targeted hairs, laser intensities used on the treatment, medications/supplements being used and pre-existing medical conditions. Therefore, some clients may respond to less than 6 treatments per area, while others may require more. Some medications and fitness supplements may CONTRIBUTE to increased hair growth, as may some pre-existing medical conditions. A man's back and a woman's face often prove to be more challenging, and may take more than the average of 6-12 treatments.

Why do I need more than one treatment?

The reason a series of 6-12 treatments is necessary for efficient hair removal is due to the three phases of hair growth. At any one time, hair on the face or body will have hair at all three phases simultaneously. The laser used for hair removal only works on hairs that are in the Anagen phase, since it's the phase of active hair growth, in which the hair contains an abundance of melanin to attract the laser.

By hitting the Anagen phase of hair growth consistently 6-12 times with treatments 4-12 weeks apart, we will be successful in weakening 80+% of hair follicles to the point of making them inactive, or incapable of producing hair. The remaining 20 or so percent will become lighter in color and much finer.

How long will my treatment be?

Larger areas such as arms, back, chest, legs, will take 1 hour or less to treat. Smaller areas such as the face, chin, lip, neck, bikini line will take 15-30 minutes or less to treat. Clients often come in during their lunch breaks for a treatment, and are able to comfortably go right back to work once the treatment is done.

What side effects should I expect following my treatment?

Immediately following a laser treatment, clients may experience redness, bumpiness and warmth on the skin (akin to the sensation of having a strong sunburn). This reaction is absolutely normal and is termed follicular edema. This is the desired end-point of a laser hair removal session. This effect disappears in a few minutes to up to 6 or 7 hours, depending on the person.

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Beam has a handful of clients that have very sensitive skin who stay red for up to 48 hours. For this reason, Beam has adopted a very conservative approach, and when we first do a consultation, we prefer to only do a small test patch on an inconspicuous area of the body, and then wait a few days just to make sure the client won't have any adverse reactions.

However rare, there is a risk of burning and scarring. Temporary itching of the skin may occur. Temporary discoloration (hyper or hypo-pigmentation) may occur (this happens more often in clients of skin type V-VI, but can potentially happen with ALL clients). A very rare response is potential stimulation of new hair follicles.

Is it safe?

Yes, laser and light-based treatments have been used for many years for a variety of medical and cosmetic procedures. Beam provides all clients with special goggles that protect the eyes from the laser light. Beam does not treat pregnant or nursing women. Beam does not treat clients with active infections; clients who are currently taking Accutane, some antibiotics, some antidepressants and other medications that could induce photosensitivity. Beam strongly counsels its clientele to abstain from UV exposure and self/spray tanning. When UV exposure is unavoidable, Beam strongly advises clients to use a high-spf sunblock and apply it often.

Which body parts can be lasered?

Men and Women come to Beam and treat virtually any area where hair exists. Women usually start with one area, typically underarms or bikini line, but end up adding other areas as well, since they love the results so much! For women, the most popular area over the years has been the brazilian bikini, followed at a close second by underarms and legs (either full legs or ½ leg- lower legs or thighs). Men are having hair removed on more and more body areas: while the back and chest have been targeted for a long time, the new trend for men is to use laser hair removal to clean up the back of their necks, the face and beard. These areas are treated to get rid of in-grown hairs or shaving bumps, or to thin out a heavy beard. Even male under arms, hands, knuckles and forearms have become targets, to completely remove or thin out the hair, in an effort to make the area more esthetically pleasing .

How much will it cost?

For our clients' convenience, Beam offers either single or package treatments. The average number of treatments a client will need is 6-12. Beam offers packages of 6 treatments per area typically at a savings of 20-30% over purchasing individual treatments. After your complimentary evaluation and test patch, Beam will determine and customize the optimum treatment plan for each client, at very competitive pricing.

What is the advantage over waxing?

Waxing is a very painful process of hair removal that has been used for ages, where hot or cold wax is spread over an area, and the hairs are literally pulled out by the root. Besides being painful, there is no "endpoint" to waxing, meaning re growth of hair always occurs, sending the client back to the waxer in sometimes as little as 3 weeks. With lasers, the expectation is that after a course of 6-12 treatments, 80+% of the hairs will not grow back, and the remaining 20 or so percent will become lighter in color and much finer. The minimal discomfort of a laser pulse also does not compare to the very intense pain of waxing.

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Who is not considered a good candidate for laser hair removal?

Laser hair reduction works best with VERY DARK and VERY COARSE hairs. The darker the better, and the coarser the better. White, gray and blonde hairs indicate the absence of melanin and are impossible to treat with laser. Red hairs respond only partially and are considered too light to be effectively treated with lasers.

It is possible to see different response rates on different body parts of the same client. For example, a female client may get 80+% reduction on underarms and brazilian, but around 40-50% reduction on her forearms, if those hairs are much finer than bikini and underarm hairs.

Clients with hormonal abnormalities can use laser hair reduction as a tool to manage hair growth, but should be warned that treatments will be needed for life, unless the abnormalities are corrected. For example, women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) can use laser hair reduction as a managing tool for excess body and facial hair, but unless the condition is successfully treated, clients with PCOS will continue to need laser treatments for life. Other androgen-affecting medical conditions will have the same outcome for both men and women, so it is important to take these into consideration as one makes the investment in laser hair reduction.

Certain medications and fitness supplements may increase hair growth, and may adversely affect or prolong the number of sessions required to achieve one's goals in hair reduction. Beam recommends that clients consider these points before making the investment in laser hair reduction.

A note about male treatments and women's faces:

Body hair growth is a biological process that is pre-programmed to start in all humans from the early teen years until very late in life. Certain body parts are prone to increased hair growth over the years simply as a virtue of advanced age and a hormonal shift that occurs in our bodies as we age. While this increase may be seen on any area, the most notorious are women's faces and men's backs. For example, it is possible for a 25 year old male to only have a few patches of back hair, but to have almost full back hair coverage by the time he is 30 or 35 (or older). Conversely, it is possible for a young woman to have 4 or 5 facial hairs in her 20's, but to see those hairs proliferate by the time she is 30, 40 or 50. Either situation is not uncommon, but must be taken into consideration when targeting those areas with laser hair reduction.

Beam actually discourages female clients from lasering facial hairs, unless those hairs are as coarse as bikini or underarms hairs. Facial hairs are VERY persistent, and may require MANY sessions, which can be quite frustrating to some individuals, and in rare cases may cause stimulation of new follicles.

In terms of male backs, while many clients see excellent results with 6-8 sessions, there are also those who may need periodic maintenance (every 3-6 months) to maintain such results.

Beam prides itself in providing honest and accurate information in an effort to arm our clients with realistic expectations.