

University of Miami Cosmetic Center

Information Sheet: Laser Hair Reduction

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The long pulsed ruby laser received FDA approval for its use in hair reduction in late 1997. The current belief is that this treatment results in permanent hair reduction but only time will tell us if it is indeed permanent. Most recent studies suggest that there is a definite reduction in hair counts after 3 treatments that is superior to that seen with electrolysis and waxing. (Polderman M. Efficacy, tolerability, and safety of a long-pulsed ruby laser system in the removal of unwanted hair. *Derm Surg* 2000 Mar;26(3):240-3) The effects are best in those patients with light skin and dark hair. Grossman et al (*JAAD* 1996;35:889) reported a 45% decrease in hair counts 3 months after only one treatment with the ruby laser. Combination of the ruby laser and a topical prescription product that decreases hair growth (VANIQA™) will likely improve the results seen with laser hair removal. Be sure and ask your doctor for a VANIQA prescription.

The following factors should be considered in you decision to undergo this laser treatment:

1. More than one laser treatment should be expected, and many treatment sessions may be required to obtain the amount of hair elimination that you desire. Most patients require 4 - 5 treatments depending on body site.
2. Treatments can be delivered at any time that hair regrowth is noted. (You do not have to wait a minimum period of time before having another treatment.) Most patients return every 4 weeks for treatment.
3. The sensation produced by the laser has been likened to that of a sparkler tingling the skin. Certain skin areas may be more sensitive (upper lip and bikini area), and you may desire the use of a topical anesthetic cream. Arrive 30 minutes prior to your appointment time if you choose to use the numbing cream (EMLA).
4. Immediately after treatment, there is usually no skin reaction. Sometimes, a patient may experience mild redness, swelling, or a burning sensation which typically resolves within a couple of hours. You may return to work immediately after the procedure.
5. Hair regrowth may occur more quickly in areas known to produce hair rapidly, such as the chin and cheeks, than in regions typically associated with slower hair growth, such as the chest and back. Patient usually report that the hair regrowth is slower, finer in texture, and more sparse after laser treatment.
6. You will obtain a better result if you do not wax or pluck the hairs for 4 weeks prior to your treatment. Shaving and cutting of the hairs is allowed.
7. Although existing laser research indicates that laser treatment is a safe effective method to remove hair, there is no guarantee that laser treatment will be able to eliminate your unwanted hair completely.
8. Side effects of this treatment are minimal and include the following:
 - Infection
 - Pigment changes -white or dark spots. This is the most common side effect in patients with darker skin types. You can decrease your risk of developing this by avoiding sun exposure 1 month prior and 3 months after the treatments.
 - Folliculitis (from ingrown hairs)
 - Skin burn or Allergy to topical solution or cream