

Laser Hair Removal Pre-treatment Instructions

The effectiveness of laser hair removal is highly dependent on patient cooperation. There are many things a patient can inadvertently do to decrease either the safety or effectiveness of their treatment. It is, therefore, imperative to follow directions by the provider.

Tanning is one of the biggest factors. Most practitioners believe it is the single most important act that patients do to decrease the effectiveness of their treatment. Although a practitioner may advertise for and even have a laser that is able to treat tanned individuals, the laser may not always be the ideal laser for an individual's hair type. These lasers usually have a longer wavelength and are much better at treating coarse hair than fine hair. If the practitioner has evaluated the area and decided the best laser to use would be one where tanning should be avoided, this is usually much heeded advice. **Tanning should be avoided for 4-6 weeks prior to treatment if one of these lasers is to be used.** Self-tanning creams and sprays need to completely fade also. During the course of treatment, if a patient is exposed to sun, sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 applied as a thick layer 20 minutes before sun exposure is recommended.

The hair needs to be in the follicle at the time of treatment. Lasers target the pigment melanin in the hair beneath the surface of the skin. **Because of this, patients should not wax, tweeze, bleach, thread, or use depilatory agents for 4 weeks prior to treatment.** If facial hair is being treated, usually avoidance of these methods for only 2 weeks is necessary because facial hair grows faster. If a form of hair removal is necessary, shaving or clipping can be done because these methods allow the hair to stay in the follicle. It is usually advisable to see some hair growth on the day of treatment.

Lotions, creams, makeup, and deodorant are removed before treatment as well. These can obstruct or refract laser light negatively.

Patient cooperation is essential for the success of laser hair removal. Patients need to follow explicit directions with regards to tanning, other hair removal methods, and topical agents.

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