Laser Hair removal and other methods of Hair Removal

Jennifer Taylor, Bryant University
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There are many different methods of hair removal available to both men and women and for any area of the body. These range from simple, temporary, at-home procedures such as shaving, waxing, tweezing and using depilatories to methods that must be performed by specialists, such as electrolysis and laser hair removal.

Laser Hair Removal

Laser hair removal is an FDA-approved procedure that uses laser light to remove unwanted hair. Laser light is an intense, pulsating beam of light that targets the dark pigment in hair. It works when this beam passes through the skin to the hair follicle, where hair growth starts. The intense heat from the laser instantly destroys the hair follicle. Laser hair removal slows the growth of hair but may take several treatments for the area to be hair-free. You can read more about how laser hair removal procedure works.

Laser hair removal treatments can only be used on people who have fair skin and brown or black hair, since it may burn people with darker skin shades and not give optimal hair removal results for those with light hair because laser beams target pigment, whether in skin or hair. Advancements in laser technology, however, are being made for those who do not fit these criteria by using a combination of radio frequency and laser.

Bareskin says that the time frame for laser treatments depends on the area being treated. For example, treating the eyebrows normally takes about 15 minutes, with four to six treatments being needed. Treatments are generally scheduled about a month apart for optimal results. Costs for laser hair removal vary greatly, with visits averaging from $200-$900. Most people say that laser hair removal feels like a rubber band snapping against your skin combined with sensation of warmth.

Electrolysis

Unlike laser hair removal, electrolysis can be used on anyone regardless of skin or hair colour, since it attacks the hair follicle and not the pigment in the hair.

Sessions for electrolysis normally are longer than those for laser since each hair follicle must be treated for one minute. For example, one eyebrow treatment usually takes about half an hour, with 15 to 30 sessions needed. The average 30-minute electrolysis session costs about $60. Electrolysis treatments have been likened to a stinging sensation with each follicle needing to be treated individually. Electrolysis, which is approved by the FDA, is especially effective for removing fine facial hair of any colour.

Shaving

Shaving is the most commonly used method of hair removal. It is effective, inexpensive, quick and has virtually no side effects. A drawback to shaving is that it is not long-lasting and often has to be done every day. Other disadvantages are that people with heavy and/or dark hair may exhibit a ‘shadow’ of dark hair under the skin.

Also, frequent shaving may cause nicks or skin irritation, especially in people with sensitive skin. Many African-American men experience ingrown hairs on the face from shaving as do women, in the bikini area. Some people use electric shavers instead of or in addition to using a blade. While an electric shaver usually causes less skin irritation, many people feel that they do not get as close a shave when using an electric shaver.
Shaving at home is very cost effective, with razors, blades and shaving creams costing between $1.00 and $25. In contrast, a professional shave may cost between $5 and $30 (or more).

Against popular thought, shaving does not change hair’s thickness or colour. Hair may, however, feel coarser and be more noticeable when it is growing out.

**Waxing/Sugar Waxing**

In this form of hair removal, hot wax is applied to the skin and a strip of cloth or paper is pressed into the wax. The strip is then quickly pulled away, taking hairs with it. Waxing, which can be done at home, is fast and inexpensive, with multiple-use kits costing about $75. Salon waxing procedures can cost from $20 to $200 depending on the area being treated. Waxing can be messy and carries with it a certain amount of pain. Sugar waxing is very similar to waxing but uses a sticky sugar paste instead of hot wax.

**Tweezing**

Metal forceps are used to pull hairs out by the root, one or a few at a time. This method of hair removal can be very useful when pulling only a few stray hairs on the face or elsewhere on the body. Adverse side effects of tweezing include pain, ingrown hairs and possible scarring. Plucking nose hairs should not be attempted.

**Depilatories**

Cream depilatories, a fairly commonly used method of hair removal, contain a chemical that dissolves hair at the skin's surface. Although cream depilatories have become gentler over the last few years, the caustic ingredients cause skin irritation in some users. They are inexpensive, fast, fairly painless and can be done at home. The disadvantages of using depilatories are that they may leave a ‘shadow’, especially in people with dark hair and must be used every few days.

**Prescription Medication**

There are oral prescription medications that have been found to reduce the rate of hair growth in some users. However, these may carry the risk of significant negative side effects. Vaniqa® is a topical cream used to reduce hair growth and is available by prescription only. It usually takes about two months of treatment before hair reduction is obvious.

Hair growth may return to previous levels within two months after stopping. Only about 58% of women showed improvement while taking this medication. Vaniqa® should not be used by men or women under the age of 12. It should only be used on the face and should not be used in the eyes, nose, mouth, vagina or on broken skin.