



Sex & Romance
Canadian Parents
Food & Drink
Weddings

Beauty
Style
@work
Living

Lifewise
Beauty

LIFEWISE
HOMEPAGE

Today on lifewise



Subscribe: newsletter
Comics
Games & Crosswords

Interactive



Our partners



ASK IVANA

Flaws of laser hair removal

By Ivana Tavernese



A friend recently told me about her experience with laser hair removal. She spent \$3,000 to permanently remove the hair from her legs, but after the treatment was complete, she says she still needs to wax.



Laser hair removal may seem like a great way to nix the annoyance of shaving, but it is not for everyone. (Comstock)

Lifewise INDEPTH

RELATED STORIES

- ▣ [What to know before you wax](#)
- ▣ [7-steps to the perfect shave](#)

I asked Dr. Goldhar, director of CosMedix MD Centre for Dermatology, who performs laser hair removal at his office why this would have happened. Without seeing my friend, he says there are a number of possibilities.

"Often in women, excess hair is associated with hormonal imbalance. So when I see people who want laser hair removal, I look for other signs of androgen excess."

Androgens, Dr. Goldhar explains, are male hormones and are often elevated in women who have excess amount of body hair or have a slight increase of body hair with acne. While this is not the case in the majority of those seeking laser hair removal, Dr. Goldhar says it does happen. "I would say this happens 15-20 per cent of the time."

In these cases, Dr. Goldhar considers various medication options. One is a medication to block the hormone, while others are topical creams to slow the rate of hair growth. Once the hormones and hair growth are kept in check, Dr. Goldhar says the laser hair removal will be successful, and even require less treatments than had nothing been done prior.

At his office, Dr. Goldhar says he begins all laser hair removal requests with a consultation. "I ask them about acne and then their periods. I want to take a look at their tummy and back area." Just below the belly button, sides of the face, upper lip, and lower back are prime areas to look for abnormal hair growth, says Dr. Goldhar. He admits that his patients at first find these requests strange, since they visited him to remove hair on their legs, not their tummy or backs. But, Dr. Goldhar explains he is checking for hormone imbalance. "It's a question of proper diagnosis," he says.

Other factors, besides hormonal imbalance, affecting successful laser hair removal may be the colour of the hair and the colour of the skin.

"The laser is effective on pigmented and growing hair, not very effective on red hair or blonde or white hair," he explains. These hair colours are not good targets for the laser.

One must be careful with tanned skin as well. "The same pigment in the hair is also in the skin, so if you aim a laser to remove the hair, the pigment in the skin may absorb that energy and is changed into heat, so you may end up doing damage to the skin as well as to the hair."

Editor's choice

Beauty

- ▣ Sephora
- ▣ LUSH
- ▣ Cake
- ▣ MAC Cosmetics
- ▣ Dove
- ▣ L'Oreal Paris Canada
- ▣ Dior
- ▣ Cargo Cosmetics
- ▣ The Body Shop

Shopping

- ▣ Urban Outfitters
- ▣ Aritzia
- ▣ Browns Shoes
- ▣ Birks
- ▣ H & M
- ▣ Holt Renfrew
- ▣ Zara



According to Dr. Goldhar, the best time for laser hair removal is before significant sun exposure. If you're thinking of laser hair removal soon, Dr. Goldhar says to act now.

This story was posted on Sun, May 20, 2007