

# Redwood Family Dermatology

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## Laser Hair Removal Information

### **What is Laser Hair Removal and How Does it Work**

Laser hair removal uses light energy with specific wavelengths to emit energy in the form of heat to selectively target and destroy melanin in the hair follicle. Lasers are effective only when hair is at an early growth stage. Because not all hairs will be at the same stage at the same time, you'll need multiple treatments to remove unwanted hair. Laser Hair Removal is generally done in **intervals of 4-8 weeks** and usually **requires a minimum of 6 treatments** to reach permanent reduction. Although all skin types can be treated some will require more treatments, and some types of hair may not respond at all. Your practitioner will advise you on your individualized treatment plan during your consultation.

### **What to Expect During the Treatment Process**

Please follow all Pre-Treatment Instructions prior to arrival (see Pre-treatment instructions). The Laser has a slight discomfort during the process however, the Laser emits a chilled air and has a cold tip that will help decrease this discomfort. We do offer a topical anesthetic to numb the area prior to treatment if necessary, however, most people do not require numbing cream and tolerate the procedure with very little to no discomfort. Immediately after the laser treatment your skin will be slightly reddened and may feel like a mild sunburn. This will self resolve in a few hours, but can last up to a couple of days for some. (see post care instructions). Hair will then begin to fall out over the course of several days to 3 weeks.

### **Side Effects/Precautions to be Aware of**

**Swelling, Redness, and Itching:** This is a normal effect of destroying a hair follicle with laser. This may last a few hours to a few days, you may apply a cold compress. If the symptoms persist or worsen, contact your provider for further instructions.

**Burns/Blistering:** Laser treatments emit heat into the skin to selectively destroy a target, (in this case hair), if too much heat is created in surrounding tissue, the skin may blister. If this occurs, apply an ointment such as Vaseline or Aquaphor, and contact your provider for further instructions.

**Pigment changes:** This is an unwanted change in the skin color, darkening or lightening. This can self resolve but may take months to do so. If this occurs, contact your provider for further instructions in care.

**Medications:** It is important to inform your healthcare provider of all medications and supplements you take. Some medications may cause the skin to be more sensitive to the laser.

**Herpes Simplex Virus/Cold Sores:** please notify your provider if you have a history of this. Laser treatments can trigger an outbreak and may need to be treated with an oral antiviral medication prior to treatment. If you have an open sore, your treatment will need to be rescheduled.

**Past Medical History:** Please be sure to inform your healthcare provider of all medical history.

**Pretreatment consultations are important to ensure you receive the best possible result.**

## **Laser Hair Removal Pre/Post Care Instructions**

### **Pre-Treatment Instructions:**

- 1. 4-6 weeks prior to appt:**
  1. Discontinue all tanning and self tanning products.
  2. Discontinue all waxing, plucking or depilatories, shaving is the only method of hair removal recommended throughout course of treatments.
- 2. 2-3 days prior to appt:**
  1. Discontinue any products that cause irritation to the skin (ie retinols, toners, anti-aging products with alpha hydroxy products, glycolic or lactic acids)
  2. If you have had any change to medications, ie antibiotics for illness, call your provider to ensure treatment may be completed as planned.
- 3. 1 day prior to treatment:**
  1. Shave treatment area, ensure that all hair is shaved completely, if assistance is needed (ie treating back hair) let your provider know during consultation so that time is allotted for this.
  2. If anti-viral is recommended by provider, you will take the medication 1 day prior to treatment as directed. (History of cold sores)
- 4. Day of Procedure:**
  1. Tylenol or Ibuprofen may be taken 1 hour prior to treatment for pain/swelling.
  2. Arrive to appt with area ready to be treated, no makeup, skin should be completely clean and shaved. (Sunscreen/light moisturizer is ok to apply morning of treatment)

### **Post Procedure Instructions:**

- 1. Immediately after Procedure:**
  1. Skin may feel like a mild sunburn, with redness, mild swelling and/or mild irritation. (Response will vary for different skin types and body area treated)
  2. Slight swelling around hair follicle is a normal response (looks like razor burn) and may remain for an hour or up to a couple of days.
  3. Cold Compresses, aloe vera gel, or topical OTC hydrocortisone may be used for swelling, redness or discomfort if desired.
  4. Makeup may be applied if desired
  5. Sunscreen will be applied to skin prior to leaving treatment room and must be worn to all sun exposed areas daily.
  6. Avoid vigorous exercise and excessive sweating until initial irritation/redness has resolved.
- 2. 1 week-4 weeks after Procedure:**
  1. Hair will slough out over the course of 7-21 days. Gentle exfoliation can be done in the shower after initial irritation resolves. Do not pluck hair, allow it to shed on its own.
  2. Resume shaving as needed after initial irritation resolves
  3. Avoid excessive sun exposure and wear sunscreen daily, sun burns after laser treatment increase risk of pigment changes in skin which can be permanent.
- 3. Call your provider if any side effects occur; blistering, pigment changes, cold sore breakouts or any other concerns. Office hours Mon-Fri 8am-5pm; after hours on call provider is available 7 days/week.**