



**The Leeds  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Trust

# Laser Hair Reduction

Information for  
patients

## What does the laser do?

Hair reduction lasers use a concentrated beam of light, which passes through the outer layer of the skin and is absorbed by the dark pigment (melanin) in the hair follicle.

The light energy is converted to heat as it is absorbed, which in turn, damages the hair and the base of the hair follicle where the cells and the blood supply responsible for new hair growth are situated.

This causes the hair growth cycle to slow down and also damages the small percentage of hairs in the 'active' growing stage (anagen phase) at each treatment.

Not all the hairs are in the anagen phase at any one time, which is why a treatment course consists of three treatments. The laser will not have any effect on white grey or blonde hair; fine, downy hair is not amenable to laser treatment.

## What does the treatment involve?

Because laser light is very bright, your eyes need to be protected by wearing goggles during treatment. In order to comply with Laser Safety Rules, you cannot be accompanied by friends or relatives in the treatment room.

Treatments involve a number of pulses of laser light depending on the size of area treated. Each laser pulse causes a brief stinging sensation and after treatment, the area feels hot for a period of time. Although uncomfortable, most people tolerate the treatment well. Cold air and gel are routinely used to cool and protect the top layer of skin (epidermis).

We do not offer local anaesthetic; however, if you find the treatment particularly painful, your practitioner can advise you about suitable analgesia (pain relief).

Immediately after treatment, the skin usually looks pink and there is usually some swelling (like nettle rash) which lasts for a few hours. Some damaged hairs may be visible in the skin for a few days until they are shed. Do not be tempted to remove these, they will fall out naturally after 5-7 days. Some patchy pinkness may also be present for 7-10 days or occasionally, longer.

Occasionally, there may be some blistering in the area followed by some scabbing or, rarely, superficial crusting which may last up to 7-10 days.

**If this occurs, you must contact the Laser Suite for further advice.**

Prior to treatment, you will be asked to sign a consent form. We work to a strict protocol with regard to treatment parameters and cannot deviate from this. Treatment parameters will be explained to you when you sign your consent form. Part of the consent process is the agreement between practitioner and patient as to which areas are suitable for treatment.

Before your first full treatment, you will need a test patch so that we can assess the reaction of your skin and ascertain if the treatment will be effective. At this appointment, we will also take photographs of the area to be treated. This will help us assess response at your subsequent visits. These photographs are kept in your medical records to be viewed only by the staff involved with your care.

We will assess your response at your first treatment appointment (approximately six weeks following your test area).

If you have not had any problems in the test area and we can see an obvious improvement, we will deliver your first full treatment to the area agreed at consent. Evidence shows that the maximum benefit is achieved after three full treatments. We cannot predict how long the improvement may last. It is unrealistic to expect all unwanted hair to disappear with Laser treatment.

Complete removal of hair **cannot** be achieved and some people only get temporary reduction lasting a few weeks or months. On average, you may expect to see **up to** two thirds reduction in hair growth.

The treatments will be carried out by Radiographers or by Doctors who are trained in laser treatments.

## What are the side-effects?

Scarring is a potential problem following any laser treatment but is very uncommon. When it does occur, it is usually a slight depression in the skin or texture change, which may return to normal in time. A thickened scar or loss of pigment in the treated area are also possibilities but very rare indeed. In some people, a brown stain can develop after treatment. This generally fades over time but can take a number of months to do so.

Ingrowing hair can cause a red rash like acne which could last several weeks. Increased hair growth has been reported rarely. **A lack of adverse reactions or scarring after a test, or any treatment does not fully exclude this risk with subsequent treatments.**

## Important information

### Prior to treatment

To ensure that you receive the best possible results, please follow the advice for the preparation, prior to and during treatment, as well as aftercare. This is a vital part of the process. It is important that you read through the following information and let us know if you have any questions or queries.

Please notify your Practitioner if your medical status changes.

Please notify your Practitioner if you have a history of seizures or fainting.

### Before and during a course of laser hair reduction treatment

- Wear fragrance free (if possible) SPF50 sun protection on a daily basis to ensure that your skin is not tanned. **We are unable to treat tanned skin**, this includes natural tan, sunbed use and fake tan. These must be avoided for a minimum of six weeks, before treatment
- Please notify the clinic in good time of any medications that you are taking. Taking certain prescription medications (for example, those that increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight) may mean that you cannot be treated
- Ensure that treatment area is free from make-up, moisturiser and sun cream
- If you wish to wear make-up before your appointment, please attend the department half an hour early to allow you to remove it and allow your skin to settle before treatment (please bring your own products)

- If other methods of hair removal are being used, it is best to allow a little hair stubble to be present at the time of treatment. **Hair removal creams** should be avoided in the **two weeks** before treatment. **Plucking, waxing and bleaching** should be avoided in the eight weeks before your treatment course commences. **Shaving** up to 1-2 days before treatment is acceptable

**This regime must be adhered to throughout the course of your treatment. Failure to follow the above advice is likely to mean that we will be unable to carry out your treatment when you attend.**

### **After treatment**

- The skin may be sensitive to injury in the first few days after treatment and should be treated delicately. Avoid any injury, rubbing and scratching
- Avoid shaving the area for five days
- Avoid strenuous exercise, swimming, saunas, steam rooms, hot baths / showers and fragranced products for seven days
- Avoid make-up, moisturiser and sun cream for 48 hours following treatment, to prevent any rubbing / friction to your skin
- **If any scabs or blisters develop and we request that you contact the department for further advice**
- The treated areas will be sensitive to sunlight after treatment. Fragrance free factor 50 sun block with five star UVA protection should be used for **six months** following the end of your treatment. Strong sun exposure should be avoided wherever possible

## Cancellation policy

The demand for laser hair reduction funded by the NHS is extremely high and we are rarely without a waiting list. We, therefore, value each and every appointment, and adhere to the local cancellation policy for elective treatments which is as follows:

**After two consecutive cancellations or one non-attendance without informing the department, you will be discharged from the clinic and your G.P. will be informed.**

## Contacting us:

If you have any general enquiries or concerns about your **treatment** or **appointment**, we would be happy to discuss them with you.

Please call the **Laser Centre** on **(0113) 392 4307** during **clinic hours, Monday - Thursday 8.00am - 4.00pm.**

### Treatment reactions

Mon - Thurs 8.00am - 1.00pm, Fri 8.00am - 11.30am

Laser Suite: **(0113) 392 4307**

Fri 11.30am - 4.00pm

Dr. Urwin's secretary: **(0113) 392 4371**

**For urgent advice about treatment reactions out of hours**

**Please contact your GP or the NHS helpline on 111**



## What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/nhsleedsfft](https://bit.ly/nhsleedsfft)

*Your views matter*



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