

HEALTH VIEWS: HAIR LASER COMPARISON

Q. What is the difference between the lasers for hair removal ?

A. There are three categories of devices for high tech hair removal. Diode lasers, Alexandrite lasers, and IPL devices (Intense Pulse Light). Diode lasers use a single wavelength of light in a highly focused beam that is attracted to the color in the hair root. The treatment requires no anesthetic or numbing cream. The heat produced in the hair root selectively shocks the hair so that it recovers very slowly, or not at all. There is less heat applied to the skin compared with electrolysis, and so there is less irritation and faster smoother recovery. In fact, electrolysis, depilatory creams, and waxing all tend to irritate pores and cause temporary red bumpy irritated skin. The opposite is true with laser hair removal. Bumpy red inflamed skin and pores immediately improve after laser. In fact, when we see patients in the dermatology clinic with “chronic folliculitis”, i.e. chronically inflamed pores and pimples, one option for therapy is to go over the involved areas with laser hair removal. This produces very fast and lasting results. It is the treatment of choice for women who have chronic red shaving bumps in the underarm and bikini line areas.

Hair removal with Alexandrite laser devices is also fast and comfortable. They operate at a slightly different wavelength of light, but have the same advantages.

An IPL device uses the heat from a broad spectrum of visible light. When you have your hair removed with an IPL device, you are accepting more risk of burns and permanent discoloration of the skin. These devices often require anesthetic cream. The customer may not realize that they are being burned, because of the anesthetic cream. The treatment head of an IPL device is relatively large, and rests directly on or next to the skin. An accidental overlap with an IPL device can very rapidly produce a burn, whereas hair lasers are more forgiving.

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