

due to the chemicals involved. Dermatologists believe the best, by far, is reducing hair growth by laser. "It is the safest method of hair reduction today," says dermatologist Dr Soma Sarkar Mukherji.

Hair removal using methods that are temporary means you have to constantly think of the re-growing hair and spend a lot of time in getting rid of it. Dr Abhijit Desai, cosmetic dermatologist says, "The other methods of hair removal may give rise to folliculitis and breakouts. Laser hair reduction according to the FDA definition is the permanent long-term reduction of hair. Eighty per cent of whatever is gone is gone forever. The balance hair is light and fine."

THE PAIN QUOTIENT

If done by an accomplished and qualified doctor by using the best machines, the process is painless. Dr Mohan Thomas, cosmetic surgeon says that the energies required varies from person to person and have to be supervised by a qualified, licensed doctor with approved machines or it may burn the patient's skin.

Dr Desai says, "There are no infections and rashes and with the new techniques available the procedure is fast and hygienic. With the application of a topical anaesthetic cream the pain can also be dealt with." He adds that the upper lip is sensitive and anaesthetic may be required for the legs and hands. "For areas like the bikini line and underarms laser is the safest and the best way," he says.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

Cosmetic physician Dr Rashmi Shetty says, "Laser

does not understand the difference between hair and skin. It can destroy anything that is black in colour. So, make sure that you are not too tanned. If you are dark skinned and your hair is dark in colour then the doctor has to keep all that in mind set up the energies accordingly."

Dermatologists say that hair that is in the growing phase or the initial anaphase responds best to laser. "Wax or shave ten days before you have planned a laser session," advises Dr Shetty.

BEWARE

Dr Thomas says, "Always do a patch test first to see whether the laser is suitable for you. And Indians have dark pigmented skin, so care needs to be taken while administering laser."

Dr Desai cautions, "Honestly, laser hair reduction has no side effects. If done by a qualified trained doctor then you need not worry but if a technician is using laser on you, chances are that you may get burnt because technicians do not possess that kind of knowledge. There are cheaper China-made versions available and they may not be as useful. You should make sure that you get the best and the latest techniques available."

RESULTS

You have to be realistic when you are looking at this treatment. It would be wrong to expect that you will have completely hairless, smooth skin in a matter of a few weeks. The result of the treatment varies from one person to the other. Dr Thomas says, "Lighter the skin and the darker the hair, the faster would be result of laser. More and more sessions would be required if you have dark skin and you need to have longer intervals as well, (about a month) between sessions."

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POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- This is the safest method of hair reduction today.
- Types of available laser that are approved by the FDA are the Nd-YAG, the Alexandrite, Ruby Laser, Diode and the LP-nd-YAG.
- If you are suffering from an underlying hormonal disturbance (like Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome), you need to simultaneously take a treatment for that, only then will the laser treatment show results.
- You need at least six to seven sessions with a minimum interval of about three weeks to a month between each session.
- If you have dark skin you need to be extra careful.
- It is extremely important that you go to a well-known, qualified dermatologist for your treatment.