
Ask the Plastic Surgeons

How does laser hair removal work and how long does it last?

By Dr. Wendell Smoot and Dr. John Smoot

Q . How does laser hair removal work and how long does it last?

A . Laser hair removal is a medical procedure that uses an intense, pulsating beam of light called laser light, to remove unwanted hair. The laser passes a light beam through the skin and targets dark pigment, called melanin, in hair. When the light beam hits the hair follicle (where hair growth originates), the intense heat destroys the hair follicle on contact. In most cases, laser hair removal slows hair re-growth, but it takes several treatments to provide an extended "hair-free" period.



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include legs, upper lip, chin, underarms, and bikini line and it's possible to treat unwanted hair in almost any area of the body. Although laser hair removal doesn't guarantee permanent hair removal, it does extend the hair-free period, which can vary from several months to many years. With multiple treatments, long-term hair removal is achievable.

Studies show that for suitable candidates, hair removal lasers can reduce hair counts by 20 percent to 90 percent. Results vary from person to person, and some respond better to treatment than others. Expect to undergo six to eight treatments spaced six to eight weeks apart to achieve good reduction of hair and slowing of hair re-growth. Afterward, periodic maintenance treatments are generally recommended.

John Smoot, MD, FACS, is Chief of Plastic Surgery at Scripps Memorial Hospital-La Jolla and Wendell Smoot, MD, FACS, has been voted by his peers as Top Doctor by San Diego Magazine for the past five consecutive years. Their plastic surgery practice was established 21 years ago and both physicians are individually board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. Either physician can be reached at www.smootmd.com or (858) 587-9850.