

## **GentleLase Laser Hair Reduction: What You Should Know Prior To Treatment**

### **What is GentleLase Laser treatment, and how does it work?**

Numerous methods exist to remove unwanted hair, including shaving, waxing, using a depilatory cream, and electrolysis. Unfortunately, all these treatments provide only temporary results. Even electrolysis has failed to produce permanent hair removal in most cases. Lasers which effectively permanently reduce the amount of unwanted hair are available. The Candela GentleLase is a device that produces an intense but gentle burst of light that fragments and removes the pigmented hair with selective destruction with minimum harm to the surrounding tissue. The laser energy interacts with pigment or “melanin” in the hair root. Blonde, gray, or red hair colors have little or no melanin in them, thus they do not absorb light as well as darker hair which contains melanin.

FDA cleared laser hair reduction as a safe and effective treatment in properly trained hands. While it may not be possible to completely remove every hair, significant permanent hair reduction is achievable. The results will depend on your skin and hair color, the body site being treated and your ability to tolerate higher energy treatments. The ideal patient for laser hair reduction is a fair skinned person with dark hair. Persons with darker skin tones may be treated, but long-term hair reduction is not as successful, and there is a higher risk of skin discoloration. Persons with light hair (red or blonde) may also be treated, but long-term hair reduction is harder to achieve.

### **How should I prepare my skin for my treatment?**

For the best results and to minimize risks, it is important to avoid direct exposure to the sun and tanning salon in the 6-week period prior to treatment. A sunscreen of SPF 30 should be used when skin is exposed to the sun, and this should be done 4-6 weeks prior to the treatment and 2 weeks after treatment, if possible. A “tan” decreases the effectiveness of the treatment, as well as makes possible hyperpigmentation (darkening of the skin), hypopigmentation (lightening of surrounding skin), or blistering from the treatment more likely.

The treatment area must be shaved the day of or 1 day prior to treatment. Surface hair if present will absorb energy that should be targeting the root of the hair follicle. Also, you should not use any form of waxing, plucking or electrolysis for 6 weeks prior to the treatment with the GentleLase. The hair root must be present for the laser to work, so if it has been removed with waxing, plucking, or electrolysis, then there is no “target” for the laser energy to “see” or interact with. Please inform the provider if you have been taking any antibiotics or other photosensitizing medications prior to the treatment.

### **Will the treatment hurt?**

There may be some stinging, burning, or discomfort experienced while the laser is in use. With each subsequent treatment the discomfort usually lessens. Most patients who have waxed or had electrolysis report that it is less painful than those types of treatments. If additional anesthesia is needed, all options will be discussed prior to the treatment. Most patients have no residual pain within 20-30 minutes after treatment.

### **What are the potential risks of the treatment?**

While the studies of GentleLase laser therapy have been excellent, and the treatment has been proven safe, there are potential risks to the procedure including: incomplete removal of hair, hypopigmentation (lightening of the skin) and hyperpigmentation (darkening of the skin).

These risks are small, and are usually temporary, but may persist for several months. Permanent scarring, skin pigment or textural changes may occur but are rare. Paradoxical hypertrichosis may occur with this laser. This is an uncommon complication, (literature range 0.6-10%) most commonly in Fitzpatrick type III or greater with dark hair. Face and neck are the most commonly affected areas. Middle-eastern/Asian are most likely to be affected.

**What should I expect directly after treatment, and how should I care for the treated area?**

Directly after the treatment, a hot or stinging sensation in the treated area may be experienced and may last up to 30-60 minutes after treatment. This sensation is normally replaced with a mild “sunburn like” skin sensitivity, which may last up to one week after treatment in the treated area. Your skin will appear red and bumpy for several hours directly after treatment and may persist for 24 hours. A “goose bump” like texture may even be experienced on the skin for approximately 1-2 hours, persisting for up to a couple of days in some patients.

You may shower and/or wash your face with a mild cleanser directly after treatment, but do not rub the skin with a cloth. Pat dry. You may apply make-up approximately 12 hours after treatment, sooner if there is no skin sensitivity. If you are using an anti-aging skin regimen, you may need to replace this with a mild moisturizer for approximately 1 week. Recommendations for a moisturizer are available upon request.

After approximately 3-5 days, the “shedding process” will begin, and may last up to several weeks, depending on the treated area. You will notice small hairs pushing their way out of the skin. This is not new hair growth but is the remainder of the hair that did not vaporize during treatment. You may exfoliate to speed this process.

**Does the correction last forever, and if not, how often will I require treatment?**

More than one laser treatment should be expected, and many treatment sessions may be required to obtain the degree of hair reduction that you desire. Treatments can be delivered at any time that hair re-growth is noted, but they are usually administered every 6 weeks. Hair regrowth can occur more quickly in areas known to produce hair rapidly (chin and upper lip) than in regions typically associated with slower hair growth (chest). **Most patients experience a 70-80 percent permanent hair reduction after 5 treatments in the treated area but should not expect to be hair free.** The remaining hair should be finer and lighter than the original hair. Some medical conditions increase the risk for new hair re-growth, but the laser treated hair should not return.

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