

# PERMANENT HAIR REMOVAL: Fact vs. Fiction (part 1)

This two part article focuses on the misconceptions, misunderstandings, myths and legends regarding hair removal and compares it to the hard reality. Firstly we look at electrolysis, Laser and IPL and misconceptions that still surround these technologies. Part II will feature other methods including the tweezer method, Ultrasound technology, Transdermal techniques, Microwave and oral and topical medication.

Hair is an emotive subject and, with human nature as it is, it means we are never happy with what we have. If we have straight hair, we want curly; brunette and we want blonde. Upper lip hair on a female is valued as a sign of exquisite beauty in certain parts of the world, but is vilified by Western society. It's ironic that balding men go to great lengths to retain what hair they can and transplant what they can't; yet young men with full heads of hair shave their scalp to meet the latest fashions or make a statement.

The beauty industry sees its fair share of new, unproven treatments of all types including methods of hair removal. Some of these accepted treatments get good results and take their well earned place on the industry's portfolio while others disappear. This leaves beauty therapists, who genuinely bought into the marketing with no support or redress, and often with disappointed, unhappy and cynical clients.

## SO WHAT ARE THE FACTS AND WHAT IS FICTION?

The English dictionary definition of the word *permanent* is *perpetual, everlasting*.

Only one system on the market today can totally prove permanent hair removal and that's electrolysis. This is primarily due to its longevity, client testimony and satisfaction. It is the answer for permanent hair removal for all skin types and colours, and all hair types and colours.

However, it appears that, over the years, the USA Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has allowed several definitions in various advertising campaigns about what is considered *permanent*.

## WHAT DOES PERMANENT HAIR REDUCTION MEAN?

A confusing definition is the word *permanent hair reduction*. Statements were issued by the FDA that it must be the same hair i.e. hairs that have been removed and do not grow back, over a period of one year after the last treatment. This was rigid and the hair growth had to be counted at several intervals, say quarterly, until the one year period was up.

This is not only confusing, but inappropriate and almost impossible to record if a dense area is treated, and if treatment is designed to thin out the hair

growth. There is also the argument that even if only one hair did not grow back, reduction could technically still be claimed.

Eventually the FDA set a standard of one year without hair growth in the treated area since the last treatment. More specifically this definition is meant to include the fact that more hair removal treatments have not been necessary during this year and the area has not grown hair since the last treatment.

## MYTH VS. REALITY: "Laser and IPL can treat all skin types and colours and all hair types and colours"

The newer technologies such as LASER (Light Amplification Stimulated Emission of Radiation) and IPL (Intense Pulse Light) were initially marketed as the answer for all permanent hair removal. Their claims have now become far more realistic as they cannot treat all hair types and colour, nor all skin colours, and they now embrace electrologists as their back up.

Now, acting in a professional and responsible manner, many laser companies will only train electrologists knowing that their superior knowledge of the hair and skin can only serve to enhance their product, and result in safer and better results for their customers' clients: a win-win situation for all concerned.

## MYTH VS. REALITY: "Laser and IPL remove hair permanently"

Laser and IPL are allowed by the FDA to claim permanent *reduction* but not permanent *removal* of hair. This newer technology is brilliant for large areas and for dark hair. For grey or white hair it just simply is not effective as these systems target the melanin in the hair. If hair is grey or white there is no melanin remaining in the hair to be targeted. The only option of permanent removal is additional electrolysis treatment to complete the job.

Laser and IPL are now recognised to be hair management systems, so whilst excellent tools in the fight against permanent hair removal, they have their limitations and clients should be made aware of this. To offer Laser or IPL and electrolysis together ensures all clients get the best options available to them however large or small an area, whatever type of colour their skin or hair is and whatever their requirements are; the perfect winning combination. 

**Vitality Magazine would like to thank Elaine Stoddart, [www.sterex.com](http://www.sterex.com), for this contribution.**