

Hair Cycles and Treatment plans

I see this all the time. A new client walks into our offices, and they think that if I remove the 50 hairs bothering them today, that's all there is to it. We're all done, right? Unfortunately, while this would be lovely, it is very seldom the case.

We talked a little bit about the stages of hair growth in the "Stages of Hair Growth" article, and how an individual hair will grow, shed, and then grow again. Sometimes this can take as long as 4-6 weeks to occur. This is assuming that the hair gets the message to start growing right away, because this doesn't always happen. Sometimes the hair will go dormant, and it can take up to a year for that follicle to start producing again.

So what does this mean for your treatment plan? Well, first the bad news. It means that what you can see on the surface of your skin is really only a percentage of the total hair you have that will eventually pop up and say hi so it can be treated. The good news - what you're looking at right after a clean shave is probably closer to 85%. This is an average, and will be slightly different from person to person, but for most people, the majority of the hair can be treated right away. Because of this, everyone's treatment nearly always progresses through the same three stages.

Clearing - This is where we all begin. Our goal at this point is to treat each section of the body that we want to remove the hair from at least once, though occasionally two or even three passes may be necessary. The clearing phase can be as quick as a few minutes for some people, but most find that a few sessions are required to get through the entire area since we are limited to treating one hair at a time. If the hair is particularly dense, or the area of the body is large, this process can take significantly longer.

Maintenance - By now the hair has visibly thinned and become noticeably scattered. The majority of your follicles have been treated by this point, with the occasional virgin hair shaft popping up from time to time. The remaining hair is your true regrowth. It will be thinner, shallower, straighter (if it was curly or distorted before), and much, much easier to remove.

Finishing - this is when you feel that your main problem is largely under control, and you start to feel liberated. You might have the occasional bothersome hair pop up from time to time, but for the most part your skin is no longer producing much of anything.

Ideally, you'll want an accelerated treatment plan for the first phase. This is where we hit the problem area and hit it hard. When you first start out your hair is going to have the thickest, deepest, most twisted roots it will ever have once treatment begins. That also means higher power settings will be required, and more time may be necessary to remove the same number of hairs. So you don't want to delay. You need those suckers gone, and you need them gone ASAP!

Once you've knocked out a full clearing or two, you can start to breathe a sigh of relief. At this point, the reduction should be clearly visible for most people, and you've earned a well-deserved break from all the action. Now, you can continue to attack the same spots over and over again at the same accelerated rate. This is totally an option, and it will work. But at what cost? What we have found out is that the hair cycles have a much more difficult time syncing up if we continue to do this. Our proposed solution to the problem? Increase the time between treatments. Why would we want to do this? It's simple. The longer we wait, the more active hair will accumulate on the surface. Then they'll get wiped out all at once, and the cycles instantly sync up. The result? You'll notice your skin will stay much smoother for much longer before it's time for your next session. This process is repeated until you feel like your treatment has been a success. This process of spacing out your appointments also has the added benefit of allowing your skin additional time to heal, and that's always a good thing :)

How long of a session you will need, how many treatments it will take, and when to begin spacing things out varies dramatically from person to person, and so visiting a local electrologist for a consultation is definitely a great place to start!