Frequently Asked Questions About Permanent Hair Removal

This FAQ is based on common questions asked of electrolysis practitioners. The information below is not intended to provide a diagnosis or define a treatment. Please consult your Certified Professional Electrologist before selecting a course of treatment.

What is electrolysis?

Electrolysis is the only permanent hair removal developed over 125 years ago to treat the removal of unwanted hair.

Electrology is the science of permanent hair removal. Using state-of-the-art technology, a minute amount of electricity is gently applied to the base of the hair follicle. This process destroys the hair growth tissue. Therefore, the regenerative ability of the hair follicle is permanently eliminated.

The term electrolysis is used to describe all methods of permanent hair removal. The electrolysis modality was the first method used to remove hair permanently back in 1875. The term electrolysis branded the process of permanent hair removal.

An electrologist inserts a very fine needle into the natural opening of the hair follicle alongside the hair shaft (keep in mind how tiny hairs are). A minute amount of current is then applied to destroy the hair growth cells.

Medical electrolysis devices destroy the hair growth cells with chemical or heat energy. All modalities equally destroy hair growth cells that causes hair growth. The modality used is the preference of the professional electrologist.

There are three modalities used today that fall under the heading of electrolysis:

1. Galvanic or electrolysis is a chemical process. The current produces a chemical reaction in the hair follicle eliminating the hair growth cells. This method is widely used in the multiple needle galvanic electrolysis, utilizing up to 16 needles simultaneously.
2. Thermolysis or short-wave produces heat. When this modality is used it heats and destroys the hair growth cells in the follicle. This modality can be utilized in two ways: (1) flash method of thermolysis uses high intensity current for less time in the follicle (2) the current is used at lower intensity and longer timing.
3. The blend method combines galvanic current with thermolysis current. Thermolysis heats up the chemical reaction in the follicle destroying hair growth cells.

[Why should I choose electrolysis over other hair removal methods?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Electrolysis is the only true permanent hair removal method and the only permanent treatment recognized by the FDA.

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[Why should I choose electrolysis over other temporary methods like laser and waxing?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

When you don’t wish to have to remove unwanted hair and have problems with ingrown hairs sensitive and irritated regrowth or dark shadow of regrowth. Waxing is a temporary solution to unwanted hair growth and can be very irritating to sensitive skin types and a nuisance to have to repeat endlessly. Waxing is not suitable for sensitive skin with dilated blood vessels or varicous veins. It also, may cause the finer hairs to become more of a persistent problem as it can stimulate the growth as well as cause distortion of hair.

Laser is only effective for dark hair and fare skin and at best it reduces hair pilocity but has been known to stimulate growth in some cases. Various British studies show that laser does not appear to extend deep enough within the follicle to reach the germinative papilla and thus destroy the hair permanently. Careful consideration of all the facts about the effects of stimulating the skins Immune Response Gene p53 is advised before under going such a procedure is recommended. For more information on laser and the effects it is advisable to visit the FDA website.

Latest studies are indicating because of the stimulation to gene p53 it affects DNA repair process and aptosis (cellular suicide). Laser output of 40 J/cm is sufficient to damage collagen fibers. To obtain the best results in laser hair removal it is necessary to develop sufficient energy to destroy the hair. Unfortunately, for our collagen, intensities greater than 40 J/ cm are commonly used during laser treatment. Consequently, laser appears to accelerate the skin aging process. The potential damage that laser can cause to structures in the skin other than the hair follicle is still unknown.

Unlike other hair removal options, professionally performed electrolysis eliminates unwanted hair, **permanently**, with unsurpassed results.  Moreover, it does so for the [largest variety of skin and hair types](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/treatment_areas.html).

Laser promoters compare laser to electrolysis although laser assisted hair removal is considered a temporary method. It has not been evaluated for long-term safety of the patient’s skin and health.

Waxing, threading and tweezing are alike. However, ingrown hairs and discoloration may result. Additionally, they may cause an increase in hair growth activity. Depilatories and Shaving can cause an irritation to the skin while the hair regrows quickly. These methods can require a lifetime of maintenance. Many can appear inexpensive but cost more due to long term use and are found to be inconvenient.

Electrolysis works on [most areas](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/treatment_areas.html) of the body to give you smooth, sleek healthy looking skin.  No other solution claims such universal acceptability and success.

[Do electrologists follow appropriate infection control procedures?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Yes, be sure to find a Certified Professional Electrologist.

The American Electrology Association has written [Standards for Infection Control](http://www.electrology.com/pdf/infection_control.pdf) following the most recent recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Association for Practitioners in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC).

[How many treatments are required?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

That is difficult to determine without a consultation as a number of factors can be contributing to stimulation of hair growth. Several treatments are required for successful treatments due to the fact many different hair cycles need to be treated. For the best results appointments should be booked according to growth. Booking a consultation to discuss various factors that may be contributing to hair growth will help determine a treatment solution for you.

The number of treatments necessary varies with each client. Treatment sessions can range from 15 minutes to more than an hour depending on the area being treated.

Factors such as hair growth cycles, the quantity and structure of hair presented, previous use of temporary hair removal methods, heredity, hormone function, certain medication and stress influence the treatment program for each individual. It is important to follow the recommended treatment plan to achieve optimum results.

[How much will treatments cost?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

That depends on the amount of hair that needs to be removed. Each hair is treated individually and is based on time. Special pricing for a large number of treatments is available at a discounted rate.

Electrolysis [costs](http://hairremoval.about.com/od/electrolysis/a/cost-electrolys.htm) depend on a lot of factors including: how much hair needs to be removed, the size of area being treated, and where you get your services performed. Generally, a large city is going to have higher rates than a small town.

For best results, follow the electrologist's recommendations in scheduling appointments. For areas that have been waxed or tweezed, treatments will be more frequent than for areas that have been shaved.

[Are all hairs eliminated in one treatment or is regrowth to be expected?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Not all hairs are visible at the skin surface at one time. Hair that is treated may take 3 to 4 months to commonly regenerate after treatment. So any hair that comes in, in the next week or so is different growth and needs to be treated as well.

Excessive hair growth, known as hirsutism can range from fine, vellus hair to dark, coarse hair on the face and body. Deep, coarse hairs cannot always be eliminated with one treatment; thus, breaking down the hair growth cells may require additional treatments. Based on a personal and confidential consultation, your electrologist will design a treatment plan that addresses your specific hair removal needs.

[What is the normal growth cycle of a hair?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Growth cycles do vary on different areas of the body but in general it can be 3 to 4 months.

Hairs have differing cycles of growth, many of which are not visible on the surface of the skin at the same time. The follicle produces the hair from the blood supply, and discards it eventually through shedding. The process of growth, rest and replacement are known as the hair growth cycle. The sequence of events is repeated constantly until a hair ceases to be formed.

[What does electrolysis feel like?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Everyone’s sensitivities are different but electrolysis should not be painful.

Electrolysis treatments sting, but individual tolerances vary greatly. Even the most sensitive person should be able to tolerate the treatments. The sting from treatment is quick, and then it’s over. If you find the treatments intolerable, then you might consult with another [electrologist](http://www.electrology.com/find.html).

[Does electrolysis have any side effects on the skin?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

It is normal to have a little swelling and redness for about 30 minutes. The skin may feel a little sensitive for a couple of days while the skin is healing. Sun block should be used to prevent damage to the skin from the sun and UV rays while it is normally healing.

Immediately following treatment, there may be slight redness, which varies with each individual. The latest technology has made electrolysis [more comfortable and effective](http://hairremoval.about.com/od/electrolysis/a/info-electrolys.htm) than ever before. Your electrologist will provide you with post treatment instructions and the personal attention you need. You are assured of the best care from a skilled hair removal [professional](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/selecting_electrologist.html).

[Can unwanted hair be removed from anywhere on the body?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Yes hair can be removed from virtually everywhere

Electrolysis works on all skin and hair types   It can be applied to most [facial and body parts](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/treatment_areas.html), including: eyebrows, chin, upper & lower lip, jaw line & sides of the face, breast & underarms, abdomen, bikini line, legs and back. Based on a personal and confidential consultation, your electrologist will design a treatment plan that addresses your specific hair removal needs.

[Can women begin or have electrolysis treatments during pregnancy?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Yes. Thermolysis can be used as the current used only localized in the follicle.

Unwanted hair can be caused by [hormonal changes](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/hormonal.html) brought on by pregnancy. Electrolysis can be performed on any normal skin. This includes pregnant women. We suggest that you seek the advice of your physician before beginning treatment.

[Can hairs be removed from moles?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Yes, they can safely be removed with a note from your doctor of written permission.

\*Sometimes if the mole is not really desired it may be advisable and have the mole removed by your doctor and the hair is destroyed as well.

Electrolysis can be performed in most moles where licensing regulations allow it. Your electrologist may require written approval from your physician.

The American Electrology Association has established specific [standards for the profession](http://www.electrology.com/pdf/standards_of_practice.pdf) including a national board certification credential, Certified Professional Electrologist (CPE). This designation indicates that the electrologist has successfully passed comprehensive national testing. Once awarded the CPE credential, the electrologist must fulfill continuing education requirements or be retested in order to maintain the prestigious [CPE status](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/cpe.html).

Membership in the American Electrology Association indicates the electrologist is keeping current with their field.

Many people [find an electrologist](http://www.electrology.com/find.html) through their local Yellow Pages and the Internet which contain valuable information regarding professional credentials. Sometimes, family and friends can make excellent recommendations. Also, one can ask a physician who is familiar with electrolysis for a referral.

You will receive the best care from a skilled hair removal [professional](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/selecting_electrologist.html).

[My grandmother used to get electrolysis treatments. Has the technology changed much?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

Yes very much so. Back in the early beginning electrolysis treatments were long and painful largely due to the fact a different method (galvanic and slower frequency) was more commonly used that required a longer time duration per hair follicle. Technology has vastly changed and with the most advanced current used now (27MHz) is so quick that your skin doesn’t have time to sense the current. Usually the skin can feel a slight warmth after the hair has already been treated.

Permanent hair removal using electrolysis has come a long way since its beginnings in 1875. Today's computer technology enables the electrologist to work with more speed and comfort. Epilators are much quicker, utilizing current timings of thousandths of a second over the longer current applications of the past, plus, intensity settings can now be modulated to varying proportions. The instruments and equipment used in a contemporary electrologist's office are just part of the changes that have occurred in the electrolysis industry.

[How does electrolysis work these days?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

The skin is not pierced but rather is like a pocket in the skin that the hair is growing out of. Basically, a very fine wire is inserted along side the hair shaft to reach the papilla and a small amount of current is given to cauterize the blood supply to the papilla thus permanently killing the hair. After the hair is treated, it is removed with tweezers and should, if treated effectively, just slide out.

All three original modalities used in electrolysis treatments have evolved. The galvanic (true electrolysis) modality still causes a chemical decomposition of the hair follicle cells; the thermolysis (high frequency, shortwave) still destroys the hair growing cells with heat; and the blend (or sequential) still combines galvanic and high frequency to disable the hair follicle.

[I heard electrolysis was painful. Is that true?](http://www.electrology.com/consumer/faq.html)

A lot depends on the quality of the equipment the Electrologist is using and their skill. The newest and most advanced technology of 27 MHz is the fastest and most comfortable on the market due to the fact your skin doesn’t have time to sense the current until it’s already over and then only a slight warmth sensation is felt.

Common Questions About Electrolysis For Hormonal Changes and PCOS

* **All of a sudden I started sprouting these coarse hairs on my chin. I am only 40 years old - what's wrong with me?**

AnswerAt your consultation, we will go through a thorough health history. This will help us figure out a possible reason why this hair came on suddenly. Among the questions will be:

* Do you have thyroid problems?
* Are you diabetic?
* Have you had menstrual or ovarian problems?
* What medications do you take?
* Do you have a family history of unwanted hair?
* Some studies show women have symptoms of menopause 10 years before they reach menopause - could this be the cause?

As electrologists, we cannot diagnose, but we can ask you questions that will help you have further discussions with your physician. Regardless of the cause, we can permanently remove the unwanted hair.

Question**I have always had a lot of facial hair. I thought I was the only one, but now I am beginning to wonder - are there others like me?**

AnswerThere are many of us with unwanted hair. In fact, most likely, your Electrologist has spent many hours receiving electrolysis treatments. His/her compassion comes from walking in your shoes. I believe there are more of us *with* unwanted hair than without!

Question**Every doctor I have seen tells me to "just lose some weight" and my periods will become normal. As hard as I try, I just can't seem to lose weight. Plus I have all this hair all over my face and breasts and belly, so I have trouble changing at the gym. What is wrong?**

AnswerAn endocrinologist (hormone specialist) may be the person to help you. When women are overweight, have trouble losing weight, have irregular or no periods, and hair in the male pattern area (which you have described), they should be evaluated by a specialist. These are classic signs of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS).

Again, electrologists cannot diagnose, but we can recognize what is not normal. If you do have PCOS, we can permanently remove the unwanted facial and body hair.

Question**What is the treatment for Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)?**

AnswerTreatment depends on the symptoms.

If weight is an issue, the most successful eating pattern is following a diabetic healthy eating plan. When choosing carbs, make sure they are complex carbs that don't raise your blood sugar.

If you develop unwanted hair, electrolysis will get rid of the unwanted hair permanently.

To address the medical issues, sometimes medications are prescribed by your physician.

Question**I went to see the endocrinologist and she said all my tests came back normal. How can that be with all this hair on my face?**

AnswerDr. Jeffrey Redmond, a NY endocrinologist, has told the Electrology profession that some people's bodies are more sensitive to circulating hormones. So just because your blood levels have come back "normal," it does not mean that they are normal for YOU! As hard as it may seem, go back and have another conversation with your endocrinologist. We must each be an active advocate for our own health.

Question**What medications cause hair growth?**

AnswerMany medications can cause hair growth or hair loss. Talk with your pharmacist about each medication you are on and also how your medications interact.