



## HAIR-FREE AND CAREFREE

Laser hair removal first-timer **Aisling Keenan** gives her honest (maybe too honest) rundown of the journey to become hair-free for good

A few weeks ago, I stood in front of the mirror in my bathroom and took a razor to my upper lip. The blonde, but fairly coarse, hairs were being shaved for the first time and it was *weird*. To be quite honest, I resembled my dad more right at that moment than ever before in my life, and I really resemble my dad. The reason I was shaving? Well, I didn't know this until I went for my laser hair removal consultation, but you have to shave all the bits you want lasered. Yep, *all* the bits.

I decided after years of waxing that I was fed up of the effort and the pain. I went to a fantastic waxing salon, the best of the best, and even at that it was still more pain than I was interested in enduring once every six weeks. A friend of mine had recently started getting lasered, and she assured me it was no more

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painful than a wax, so I figured, if I'm doing that every six weeks forever, I might as well invest in laser and make the hair removal more permanent.

### HIGH MAINTENANCE? ME??

With my goal now being #HairfreeAndCarefree, I booked an appointment for a consultation in the nearest laser clinic to my house, Sensus Laser in

the Pavilion, Swords. I'd heard good things about Sensus' other branches (a friend of mine was getting laser tattoo removal with them—yikes!) so I said I'd give it a go.

I say this a lot, but all of the seemingly high-maintenance beauty things I do are actually done with a view to becoming, eventually, exceedingly low maintenance. While I knew from the beginning laser doesn't guarantee 100 per cent hairlessness forever, I did know that it'd mean much, much less maintenance than normal.

Sharon Donlon, the head woman at Sensus, told me: “Laser is a permanent reduction of hair growth but there is no way on planet earth you can remove each and every hair permanently. The reason for this is that there are billions and billions of hair

# XPOSE



## BEAUTY X HAIR REMOVAL

follicles in our bodies; some are active and visible, others are dormant and there are a number of factors that can trigger the dormant follicles to grow such as hormones, medications and stress. Twice a year top ups could be required, depending." So it's not like I'll never sprout a hair again, but between 70 and 90 per cent reduction in hair growth is the average. It sounded good to me!

### THE CONSULTATION

I met Sharon so she could look at my hair and see was I suitable for treatment and patch testing. She advised me in advance to make sure I had no tan on for two weeks prior to treatment... That was a challenge in itself. I am milk-bottle white and use developing tan to make myself an acceptable shade of (slightly less) pale. I stuck to the instant in the lead up to the appointment, and used coconut oil to remove any remnants in the week leading up. She also told me not to take any medication for 24 hours before, and to make sure I hadn't taken antibiotics for two weeks too. Apparently, medication affects the photosensitivity of your skin—good to know.

Because I was nervous about the patch test (I'm a wuss) I asked Sharon had she had laser herself. She told me, "I couldn't sell you something I hadn't tried and tested, and at this stage I've been lasered almost head to toe. You'll struggle to find any hairs on me bar the hair on my head!"

Then, to my surprise, she described it as life-changing! Well I'm always up for having my life changed, and her enthusiasm and confidence had me convinced. Sharon explained, "I was extremely self-conscious as a teenager about hair growth on my arms and underarms, so much so I would opt out of PE class. When I began working with laser I couldn't get over the difference it made—most importantly to my own confidence. I don't own a razor anymore as a result of the laser treatments I've had done and only need to buy one when I do my top-up sessions which is maybe twice a year, it is just fantastic! Holidays are hassle-free and growing out hair for a wax is a distant memory."

Okay, I was in the cult of the laser for real now. The patch test, which was carried out on every area I was having done (legs, bikini, underarms and upper lip) felt like nothing more than a little bit of heat followed by a one-second-long flick of an elastic band on the skin. There's also a little suction where the machine attaches on to your skin so the laser is targeted. But out of ten, the pain was a two, maybe a three at the max. Whereas I'd have said my wax pain in the same areas would've been a six or seven (or an eight, if I was on my period). I booked in for my first full session there and then, and came back two weeks later to get the full monty. But I wanted to see these results she was talking about, and I wanted them ASAP.

### THE DAY BEFORE

Shaving every square inch of your body 24 hours prior to your laser is not a very sexy endeavour—but it has to be done. You can't wax, use hair removal creams or any other method—shaving it has to be. I will admit, the idea of shaving my hoo-ha filled me with intense terror. My advice is this: buy a brand new razor, use lashings of baby oil., get on the ground, on a towel, in front of a mirror and for the love of lady lumps, take your time. In terms of your body, exfoliate your skin in the week ahead of the appointment, but not within 24 hours—it'll leave your skin sensitised.

Make sure there's no trace of tan on your skin, don't take any accidental 'I was hungover' paracetamol, and you should be good to go. They'll ask you to sign a form to confirm all of the above is okay, too.

### THE APPOINTMENT

All in all, my legs, full bikini, underarm and upper lip appointment took about an hour and 15 minutes. It's so fast. The hand piece (what they call the laser) is placed on your freshly-shaved skin, suction, click and done. Each patch lasts a split second and is over. I barely had time to register the slight discomfort. My pain threshold is genuinely not that high, so I think it's doable for most people.

The discomfort and post-appointment ickiness I was expecting was so minimal that I popped down to Penneys for a look after my laser was done. I'd advise anyone getting it done to wear cotton underwear and

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loose-fitting clothes to the appointment—the last thing you want to do is squeeze your Aloe Vera-covered bits into a pair of super skinnies.

### PICK YOUR PLACE

I definitely wanted to go to a reputable clinic to get my laser—my skin was not something I was willing to mess around with, and neither should yours be. Burns can happen if you go to someone who isn't properly

## THE SUSS

The key laser takeaways to know before you decide to get zapped...

- ✓ You'll need to get an initial course of six sessions, one happening every six weeks to give your skin and hair follicles a chance to recover.
- ✓ You can't take antibiotics for two weeks prior to treatment, or any medication 24 hours beforehand.
- ✓ Shaving beforehand is essential. No other hair removal method can be used.
- ✓ Your skin can't have a natural or a fake tan on it. The laser responds to pigment, natural or not, and you'll risk burns if you're freshly tanned.
- ✓ The pain is negligible and much less hardcore than waxing.
- ✓ It's really important to stick to the pre- and post-care guidelines given to you by your therapist.
- ✓ If you're applicable for laser, your hair growth will be reduced by approximately 70 to 90 per cent, with top-up sessions needed occasionally.

**You can contact Sharon and the Sensius team for a free consultation at [hello@sensius.ie](mailto:hello@sensius.ie) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/SensiusIreland.ie](https://www.facebook.com/SensiusIreland.ie). The Sensius team also provide laser tattoo removal.**

**Catherine Hollywood is a registered general nurse at [River Medical](http://www.rivermedical.ie), see [www.rivermedical.ie](http://www.rivermedical.ie).**

trained—our Editor's sister had a highly painful horror story years ago when laser first appeared in Ireland and an enthusiastic friend cranked the machine up too high. Thankfully for her the scarring wasn't permanent.

Catherine Hollywood is a nurse working at [River Medical](http://www.rivermedical.ie) in Dublin 2, and her key advice to me was to make sure the person operating the laser machine is highly trained. She said, "Be mindful about where you have laser treatment done. A laser machine is extremely powerful and they need to be operated by someone who has gone through the rigorous and on-going training." And when I say Kirsty, the poor dote who had to laser my bum-cheeks and other unmentionables, is fantastic at her job and super skilled with the laser machine, I'm not exaggerating. It's good to have someone who makes you feel at ease, as you're in such a vulnerable position.