

Procedure zaps unwanted hair

BY CHANDRA HARRIS
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Vicki Winston is transforming her look without going under the knife.

The 38-year-old shed a few pounds and decided a new wardrobe wouldn't be enough.

So, she's under the laser for a few minutes, almost monthly, to get rid of unwanted hairs from her chin, underarms, legs and bikini line.

Ideal Image, a West Knoxville laser hair-removal clinic, fit into her scheme "to look and feel better every day."

Noted as one of the top nonsurgical cosmetic procedures right after Botox, laser hair removal is the answer "to getting rid of those painful days of waxing or awkwardly standing in the shower trying to shave, only to have stubble days later," Winston said.

The treatments, which combine energy and light to penetrate hair follicles and permanently remove unwanted hair, will cost Winston around \$2,700 altogether. The laser can zap around 20 hairs per second.

A small price to pay, Winston said, "when you consider how much you pay anyway in shaving products and professional services for waxing in a year."

Winston said the pulsed light doesn't hurt nearly as badly as waxing. "It feels like the snapping of a rubber band on your skin," she said.

After her first treatment, Winston — a massage therapist and owner of 3Gardens Center for Massage and Psychology — said, "I could already feel the difference and the smoothness of my skin."

With the popularity of plastic-surgery reality shows such as "Dr. 90210," it's no wonder Americans are obsessing now about having



Anna Worley, a physician's assistant at Ideal Image, uses a laser to remove hair from client Vicki Winston's leg.

PHOTOS BY JEFF ADKINS/NEWS SENTINEL

hairless bodies, said Dr. Robert Ailes, Ideal Image chief medical director.

"We are constantly striving for the close-to-perfect body and look," said Ailes.

And the benefits aren't just skin-deep. For those with an overgrowth of hair on their face, this procedure "gives a dose of self-esteem," said Heather Martinez, office manager at Ideal Image.

Martinez said about 80 percent of laser hair-removal clients are women, but it isn't "a girls-only thing. ... We've had men get hair removed from their ears or the nape of their neck."

Dr. Kathleen Gilmore, corporate medical director and vice president of American Laser Centers, said strides have been made in treating people with dark skin.

The pigment in dark skin attracts more light, which can cause blistering or altering of the skin pigmentation if the

appropriate laser isn't used, she said.

Advances are still being made in treating light hair colors. Because the laser recognizes the melanin in the hair follicle, treating light hair isn't as effective as dark hair, said Ailes.

There is no one-size-fits-all laser treatment, so Gilmore encourages clients to do their research, ask questions and seek out a professional.

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