

hair today, gone tomorrow

No more plucking, waxing or shaving. It's the stuff of dreams.

By **Kate Newman.**

Most of us spend time each month, each week or even each day on hair removal. For some the battle of the fuzz is an endless task, for others, even if it's not quite so momentous, it's still a pain in the neck. What if I told you that the end of the quest for silky smooth skin is in sight? What if I told you that you never have to make that monthly waxing appointment again, or carve your legs ups in the shower because you decided to wear a skirt at the last minute?

When I mention laser hair removal, I know more than a few of you are going to wince. Some of you will have tried this before, and like many revolutionary beauty treatments (think Botox or facial peels) it has its fair share of horror stories. The one that you're most likely to hear is how painful it is.

But new, more advanced technology and well-trained experts have made all the difference. Hairstop, in Sydney's Edgecliff, is a new salon devoted entirely to hair removal. Wendy Gilbert-Grey, the clinic's owner, says that when her clients leave happy with their results it makes her day. "For some people unwanted hair is ruining their lives. If I can remove it for them it gives them a new sense of confidence," she says.

the professionals

Gilbert-Grey is also a self-confessed hair junkie. "I'm a qualified beautician but I don't do any other beauty work, I only deal with hair removal, it's my speciality," she says. She's also more than ready to warn you about any cowboys out there – reputable doctors and dermatologists among them – most of whom are simply not properly trained to use the equipment, or are not using up-to-date technology.

"There are horror stories out there," says Gilbert-Grey. "It's important to go to someone well qualified. I've had people who've come to me with terrible botch jobs: burns, scars, you name it," she says.

I'm feeling confident when I turn up for my first appointment at Hairstop. I'm to start a month after my last wax and each subsequent treatment must be done at monthly intervals. Today I'm having my bikini line and my legs done. The darker the hair the better the treatment works. My hair is medium in colour so I'm told it will take about eight sessions.

laser show

I lie down on a bed and Gilbert-Grey shaves the area to be treated, then covers the spot she's going to zap in a conductor gel before asking me to put on some dark glasses. She holds the machine to a spot on my legs and tells me to breathe in then as she zaps, she tells me to breathe out. I jump, but it's more from the expectation of something horrible and the bright light that flashes from the machine, than any pain. After a few more zaps I get the hang of it. It feels like nothing more than a momentary sting and then it's gone.

Bikini lines are much more delicate so I'm feeling a little anxious about that area. It is more uncomfortable but no more than waxing, and you don't sting afterwards. The few zaps she does at the top of my inner thigh are particularly unpleasant but are the only times that I let slip an "Ow!" But then it's over.

I'm advised not to exercise for 24 hours (sweat can cause infections in the hair follicles) and to keep the treated areas out of the sun. No hardship there, it's the perfect excuse to watch DVDs.

A week later my hair is growing back just as if nothing happened. I wonder if the treatment has worked. I call Gilbert-



Out, damn hair! Laser treatment helps you stay silky smooth.

Austral

Grey. She tells me I just need to be patient. Patience isn't a virtue that I was born with so over the next week I try to pull out hairs; a few come but most don't. About two weeks later I'm amazed when, after exfoliating, there is a mass exodus in the shower and I step out hair free.

Two weeks later I have my next appointment. By then some hairs have grown back but there are bald patches. My bikini line has worked particularly well. We begin the process again. Each month I go back there is less hair. My bikini line is ready for that day on the beach after about six sessions; my legs, as predicted, have taken a little longer. After eight sessions they're hair free. I still have some of the finer hairs around my knees, but they're so pale they'd probably be impossible to zap.

It's a long and reasonably expensive process – but no more expensive than a lifetime of waxing – and the results are great. To be able to put on my bikini and go to the beach without holding everyone up while I hurriedly de-fuzz in the bathroom is great. I'm still undecided which part I'm going to get zapped next, but like most of Gilbert-Grey's clients, I know I'll be back for more.

more information

■ Hairstop is based in Edgecliff, Sydney and specialises in both women's and men's hair removal. (No area too large, too small, or too hairy.) Call (02) 9362 8399 or visit www.hairstop.biz for prices and more information.