

# AEGIS NEWS

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## *Does Laser Electrolysis Work?*

Is it possible for coherent (laser) light to kill hair? Certainly. Has anyone yet devised a laser treatment system which kills hair permanently and safely? Perhaps. Has anyone demonstrated permanent hair loss with laser electrolysis. Not yet, at least not to our knowledge.

**H**air. For so many of us, we have it where we don't want it, and want it where we don't have it. We are deluged with promises of products and procedures to grow, condition, color, and remove hair. Some of them work; some of them don't. The trick: find the right product. Find the right procedure.

Humans are famous for frantic and unproductive searches for, among other things, the perfect aphrodisiac, a tonic to grow hair on bald pates, the "gay gene." The more desperate we are, the more readily we will accept charlatans, frauds, and quacks — and the more so if they themselves believe in their particular brand of snake oil.

Getting rid of facial hair is of crucial importance to transsexual and transgendered women. And it's easy to do. We can shave it, wax it, pluck it, cover it with Pan Stik, or pluck it with tweezers — and now we can have it zapped with a laser. The problem with these methods is that they are all temporary. Eventually, the hair comes back.

Electrolysis is a proven way to kill hair. It is the *only* proven way to kill hair. Even so, it is slow, expensive, and worst of all, painful. Improperly done, it can damage the skin. And it is not 100% effective. Each hair requires multiple treatments, depending on the skill of the operator. An inexperienced or inefficient electrologist may not even kill any hairs at all. Yet for all its limitations, electrolysis works. Hair is removed, and it does not grow back (or rather, it does grow back, but as the downy vellus hairs that women and children have on their faces).

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The newsletters of the transgender community have been full of late with accounts of positive experiences with laser electrolysis. "I was able to get in the

hot tub right after treatment, and my skin felt so smooth!" "It's been three weeks, and I have only a light regrowth." "I still shave every day, but the hair is lighter than before." The problem, of course, is that however optimistic those treated may be about the permanency of their hair loss, it's too soon to tell how much hair will come back. *To date, no study has conclusively (or even inconclusively) shown that hair loss from laser treatment is permanent or safe.*

Laser light certainly has the potential for killing hair; the problem is the delivery system. The light must be directed to the hair root, where it will zap the root. There are a number of recently-developed techniques for reaching the root, including Thermolase's technique of coating the skin with carbon powder. One or more of these techniques may even work. But that's still to be seen.

Certainly, someone will eventually develop an effective and safe delivery system for laser light. Until then, we counsel: think electrolysis.