



Hair Zappers

New technology removes hair — everywhere.

Compared to laser hair removal, razors seem about as cutting-edge as Laura Bush's wardrobe. Now the fourth most popular non-surgical treatment, behind Botox, microdermabrasion, and collagen injections, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, lasers finally may work for women who don't have the ideal light skin/dark hair combination. Dermatologists are now finding success with a two-pronged treatment for women with blonde hair and fair skin—Intense Pulsed Light combined with radio-frequency and optical energy, another form of light therapy. And dark hair on a variety of skin tones (including dark skin) responds to the 1064 Nd: YAG laser, according to new research in the medical journal *Dermatologic Surgery*. In the study, one month after the third and final treatment, the patients experienced hair reduction of 69 percent.

Some brave women are now putting the latest technology to use in unprecedented—and racier—areas, says Sundae Parascandola, an aesthetician at JUVA MediSpa in New York City. "One of the most requested treatments is the laser Brazilian," Parascandola notes. "There's more precision with the lasers so I can effectively treat the labia and the perimeal area. And by the fourth session, there's a 90 percent reduction in hair without the ingrowns that come with waxing."

One thing hasn't changed about laser: It's not a procedure; it's a process, warns Citron. "The average patient requires a minimum of three to five treatments—at an average of \$360 a session—because hairs are at different stages of growth and only the active growing hairs respond." While laser hair removal isn't permanent, it does reduce hair regrowth by 40 to 50 percent per session. —THERESA O'ROURKE

Skin SOS

By Theresa O'Rourke

How appropriate that the bikini was named after a 1940s atomic bomb site: The mention of the word sends women running for cover. The good news? Baring all is decidedly more bearable in 2004—thanks to several new products and atomic-age in-office treatments.

SUN SPOTS

To correct sun damage that has already appeared as dark patches on the chest, serums containing ascorbic acid, kojic acid, or fruit acid such as Lancôme Absolu Anti-Age Spot Serum) can lighten pigment and make the skin tone more uniform. For sensitive skin, New York City dermatologist Roy Geronemus prescribes EpiQuin, a hydroquinone and retinol cream that releases antioxidants into the skin gradually, lessening the chance of irritation. Studies have shown that it visibly reduces dark spots in four weeks. If the damage is more severe and diffuse (and money is no object), Washington, D.C., dermatologic surgeon Tina Alster recommends photodynamic therapy, a light treatment that costs about \$1,000 a session. "It used to take five or more treatments to see results, but now there is a topical solution called Kerastick that heightens the efficacy of the treatment," Alster explains. "I apply it about an hour before treating the skin and can lighten larger spans of dark spots on the chest and neck in roughly two sessions."

DRY SKIN

Think of dry skin like a hangover—a rough but self-inflicted condition. To prevent itchy, flaky skin, keep showers to less than 15 minutes and use a two-in-one, soap-free body wash and moisturizer, such as Clinique Water Therapy Body Moisture Wash or Olay Moisture Rinse. After bathing, when skin is still damp, slather on a moisturizer, such as Currel Daily Moisture Therapy Lotion Ultra Healing. For particularly parched areas, like the elbows and knees, Livingston, New Jersey, derma-

tologist **Cheryl Citron** advises using an over-the-counter 12 percent lactic acid cream, such as AmLactin or asking your doctor to, prescribe a prescription lactic acid or 40 percent urea cream. They break down the intercellular bonds that cause thick, flaky skin, rather than coating it.

STRETCH MARKS

Like an overachieving coworker who sends emails at 11 P.M., skin likes to leave evidence of how hard it works—in the form of stretch marks. The only cream that can reduce them is prescription-strength Retin-A, which removes redness so that stretch marks appear to blend into the skin.

You can also beam away older stretch marks (which tend to fade to white) with an Excimer laser, to stimulate pigment production, Aister says. "The problem is, without maintenance, the pigment fades over a few months." Your doctor bills, however, might not—the treatment costs between \$300 and \$1,000, depending on the number of marks.

BACNE

"If you can't see it, then it doesn't exist" seems to be the delusion many women have about acne on the back. **Citron** recommends an antibacterial cleanser, like Neutrogena Fresh Body Herbal Wash, or a prescription acne wash with benzoyl peroxide or sulfur. Then use a topical benzoyl peroxide, such as prescription Triax, which also includes glycolic acid to exfoliate dead skin and zinc lactate to reduce irritation and redness. "Apply it before you go to bed—and sleep in an old T-shirt, because it bleaches A colored fabrics," **Citron** says.

When the acne is severe, more and more dermatologists are now reaching for their lasers, which can wipe out stubborn breakout in as little as two to three visits separated by one to two months. The Smoothbeam laser can treat deep acne and smooth out scars; the Vbeam, a pulsed-dye laser, works well on redness; and photodynamic therapy is best and most cost-effective for treating larger areas of inflammation, Alster says. Each session costs \$500 to \$1,000.

