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Finding a Laser Hair Therapy Expert by Russ Klettke

Article published on July 24th 2012 | Alternative Medicine

Discover How to Find a Qualified Laser Hair Therapist

Laser hair therapy isn't the latest miracle cure for hair loss, but it works for some people with certain hair loss conditions.

Laser hair therapy to restore and rejuvenate hair growth is considered a viable option for men and women experiencing hair loss. While credible laser product manufacturers and studio therapists do not claim miraculous results, most state with some legitimacy that they can stimulate regrowth of still-extant follicles and strengthen hair that has not yet been lost.

Low-level laser therapy (LLLT), or laser hair therapy, to its disadvantage, unfairly gets lumped into the category of â€œthe newest miracle cure for hair loss.â€• That term implies everything that has come before it failed to live up to expectations. Those expectations are justified; however, laser has a bit more evidence to prove its efficacy.

To be sure, the history of hair loss remedies is one that includes a large number of fakes and charlatans. Papyrus texts from ancient Egyptians mention hair loss cures from boiled porcupine hair used as a topical treatment, as well as using fats from crocodile, hippopotamus, ibex, snake and tomcat in a similar application. In the 19th century, snake oil salesmen sold â€œSeven Sutherland Sisters Hair and Scalp Wash with Hair Fertilizerâ€• under a bottle label that featured the purported female siblings, all of whom had stunning long, thick hair.

The 20th century brought us more than just lotions and potions. This became a time for miracle devices.

In the 1920s, the Allied Merke Institute introduced the Thermocap, a cone-head-like device that sat on the patientâ€™s head while it emitted heat and a blue-colored light. Users were instructed to sit under the Thermocap for 15 minutes every day. A decade later, the Crossley Xervac used vacuum suction to stimulate hair growth -- you could rent one for home use or get the same treatment in a barbershop.

Fast-forward to today. Medications such as minoxidil (Rogaine and other brands) and finasteride (Propecia) provide two methods for stemming hair loss, and hair transplant surgery -- first devised in 1939 Japan -- has become more aesthetically convincing and effective. Topical, nonpharmaceutical scalp-stimulating treatments are available and sometimes used in conjunction with other forms of hair loss treatment, including LLLT. Particularly since the FDA approved laser hair therapy as safe in 2007, that form of treatment has grown in popularity. Note that a safety approval is not an efficacy endorsement: The FDA is just saying it canâ€™t hurt.

Given this history of hair loss treatments, hair loss sufferers should approach laser hair therapy with caution. Not only do you have to determine for yourself if the degree of effectiveness meets your expectations, but also you should discern between in-studio providers who administer the treatment effectively and those who do not.

Find a laser hair regrowth therapist who knows how LLLT works

There is no licensing or certification required to administer laser hair therapy. Only in the state of Texas is the presence of a medical doctor required before LLLT can be used. The therapist or

aesthetician is typically a cosmetologist with a state-administered license. This is required of all hair care professionals who physically touch the heads of clients.

So, absent LLLT certifications or licenses, how would a potential laser therapy patient identify a competent laser hair therapist? What follows is a checklist of things to consider.

How established is the business? Given that the FDA approval of laser hair therapy came in 2007, many salons and studios using the technology are new to it. Some of the more established businesses work in technologies and services that precede LLLT, such as topical treatments, weaves and hair replacement systems. The longer a studio is in business, the more that studio is likely interested in protecting its reputation with good results and satisfied clients.

What do past clients say about their experiences? We now rely on online rating services (e.g., Yelp) to tell us what past customers say about retail services. Note that such businesses often â€œgameâ€• the reviews, asking people to give them good ratings. Countering that, disreputable businesses will have friends or employees register poor reviews of a competitor. We suggest you approach this as a savvy consumer. Search broadly for reviews, and learn to discern: factor out the â€œI hated it!â€• and â€ love it!â€• comments and look instead for the responses that provide detail, reasons why they loved, hated or have mixed feelings about the studio and its services.

Does the studio specialize in hair restoration, or is it an add-on service to general hairstyling? There is no right or wrong scenario as to whether hair regrowth and restoration are exclusively the business of the studio or just an add-on. A general styling salon may, with dedicated staff and salon floor space, provide a holistic approach to styling and hair health. But such a business should provide the complete range of services that a comprehensive laser hair therapy treatment program would include: regular (twice-weekly in most studios) appointments; complementary scalp massages, shampoos and ointments; and trained therapists/aestheticians who are experienced in the technique.

In some cities, there are clinics that specialize in hair loss therapies. These are the businesses that tend to purchase better equipment and have staff who approach hair loss holistically. That means they may offer a selection of methods and will be able to make recommendations that are appropriate and informed by experience.

Is the studioâ€™s LLLT program appropriately priced? Understand that the use of laser hair treatment is not a one-shot method -- far from it, in fact. Most reputable studios structure a program around a 12-month schedule, with twice-weekly appointments, and scalp-rejuvenating oils, ointments and massages are part of that program. In some cases, the therapy might be used in conjunction with treatments of finasteride or minoxidil. The annual cost of programs varies from $2,000 to about $6,000, determined in part by geographical location and the extent of complementary services (scalp massages, for example).

â€œYou have to do laser therapy 100 percent or not at all,â€• says Ed Gawerecki, general manager and clinic director at Hans Wiemann Hair Replacement in Creve Coeur, Missouri. â€œWe own laser equipment that costs $30,000 per machine, but some hairstyling salons will have a $6,000 or $7,000 machine they offer as an option to their regular clients,â€• he says. â€œOur equipment includes a full bonnet, is computer driven and features important timing devices. The less expensive machines are a flat panel exposure of light and few other features.â€• Gawerecki also notes that the Hans Wiemann program requires a full 12-month commitment, while the hair salons may offer a monthly plan at just $199. â€œLaser will not work in four weeks. Many people will quit prematurely and always have a bad impression of what it could do.â€•

What almost all LLLT proponents insist is that laser hair therapy is a means to halt hair loss and rejuvenate follicles that are weakened but still alive on the scalp. Individuals who have been bald for several years should not expect full regrowth of their hair, which is a far more honest claim than those made in the past by quacks and charlatans.

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/alternative-medicine-articles/finding-a-laser-hair-therapy-expert.htm - Article Side

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Article Keywords:
hairloss treatments, hair loss, Hair regrowth therapy, Laser hair therapy, hair extensions, hair replacement, hair systems

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