

Temple Gender Affirming Surgery Program

Permanent Hair Removal for Vaginoplasty

Permanent genital hair removal is a vital part of preparing for Vaginoplasty. But it can also be confusing and overwhelming! We have created this handout to help you understand the Why, How, and Where of hair removal

Why?

When the surgeons create your new vagina, they use skin from your existing anatomy to line the vaginal canal. It is very important that this skin be free of any active hair follicles, to prevent hair growth inside your vagina. Hair growth inside a vaginal canal can cause many problems, including hygiene challenges, pain during dilation and penetration, and a less pleasing appearance that may contribute to dysphoria. There is no safe or effective way to remove hair after your canal has been created, which is why thorough removal before surgery is so important.

We understand that this part of the process can feel daunting, and that it is not a step most folx are excited for. But it is also a step that can cause significant delays in getting your surgery scheduled, which is why we bring it up early and often. The more proactive and diligent you are in pursuing hair removal, the faster and more smoothly your path to surgery will go!

How?

Hair is produced by hair follicles, which are very tiny organs in the upper layers of your skin. Temporary hair removal (such as shaving or waxing) removes the hair itself but leaves the follicle intact. Permanent hair removal means destroying the follicle itself, so that it cannot produce more hair. The two proven techniques for destroying follicles are laser hair removal (LHR), and electrolysis, each of which has advantages and disadvantages for individual patients.

Laser Hair Removal	Electrolysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses focused beams of light to heat and destroy multiple hair follicles at once• Because LHR relies on light absorption, LHR is often more effective for dark hair and light skin pigmentation• Shorter/faster sessions• Less painful (for most patients)• Some follicles may only be damaged, and may regrow weeks or months later	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses an electrified needle to “zap” and destroy one hair follicle at a time• Because light is not involved, equally effective on all hair and skin types• More specialized – fewer providers and may have higher costs or longer waits• Longer/slower sessions• More painful (for most patients)• More reliably permanent than LHR alone

Regardless of the technique used, it is important to understand that hair follicles naturally go through cycles of dormancy and growth, so it is normal to have some regrowth weeks to months after a hair removal session. Each patient will have a unique process, due to different hair color and thickness, different skin pigmentation, and different rates of hair regrowth. It will take several sessions over months or even years to achieve permanent hair removal. Ultimately, what is most important is finding a reputable, experienced provider to perform the hair removal. They will be able to assess your hair and your needs, and create a personalized plan to achieve the degree of hair removal necessary for surgery.



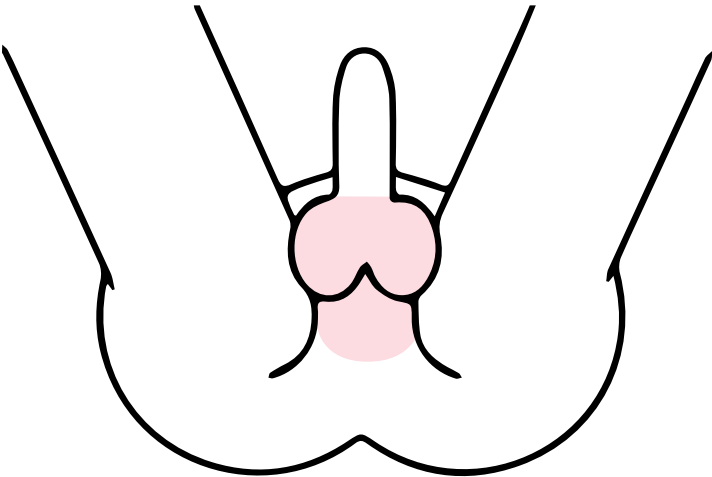
What about home laser hair removal?

In recent years there has been increased marketing of at-home “laser hair removal” devices using IPL – Intense Pulsed Light. While these devices can reduce hair growth and may seem like a less expensive, less intimidating option, they are simply not powerful enough to achieve the degree of permanent hair removal necessary for surgery!

Where?

So, exactly what areas of your skin need to be hair-free for surgery? This is a question that may have different answers for different surgeons, depending on exactly what skin they use to line the vagina. It is important that you follow our guidelines for hair removal, even if you may have heard of different guidelines from other surgeons. All hair within the entire “red zone” of the diagram below **MUST** be removed in order to proceed with surgery.

Outside of the defined areas, your hair removal is all about you and your preferences! Some patients may find keeping some pubic hair outside of the surgical zone to be affirming, while some patients may want removal of more hair. Hair removal providers may offer “packages” that include nearby areas of skin, or may bill according to time. In either case you can and should have an open conversation with your hair removal specialist about your personal goals. We want you to feel as happy and comfortable with your anatomy as possible, and making your own choices around what hair you do and do not keep can be a powerful part of that!



- Removal all hair from the scrotum and base of the penis
- Remove all hair from the perineum (space between scrotum and anus, between thighs)

When am I finished, and what do I do then?

During your surgery, our team can perform some additional removal of hair follicles from the skin we use to line your vaginal canal. But the more hair you can have removed before surgery, the less risk of any hair growth after surgery. As a general guide, tell your hair removal technician to aim for at least 70% hair removal, but more removal is better!

At each visit, ask your hair removal technician about your progress. When they confirm you have removed at least 70% of the hair in the area shown, please notify our team at GenderAffirmingSurgery@tuhs.temple.edu so that we may update your chart and move you forward towards scheduling a surgery date!

