

Electrolysis Hair Removal

Information for patients

What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet is designed to tell you more about what electrolysis is, and why you are being offered it.

What is the treatment for?

Electrolysis is used to stop the growth of unwanted hair. This is particularly useful when planning Plastic surgery (surgery to change how you look), and when the simplest way of doing that surgery will lead to hair growing in an unwanted place. This is also useful if the surgery has already taken place, and the hair growth now needs to be stopped.

Why do I need this operation?

We are offering you this treatment because the skin we want to use to cover your new ear grows hair. Even though the skin will have to be cut and moved around to cover your new ear, it will continue to grow hair. The only other way to avoid hair growth is to do more complicated surgery, which will result in more scars and a less predictable end result.

Preparation

You will be asked to attend the hospital for a series of treatments, each lasting around 30-60 minutes. It will help if you have had a healthy fluid intake over the days leading up to the treatment so that your skin is well hydrated. This can help make the treatment more effective.

Anaesthetic

Whilst we don't expect the treatment to be painful, there is a reasonable chance that you might feel some discomfort, either as the needles is being inserted, or as the electrical impulse is applied. Discomfort from each needle insertion should only last up to a second, but will need to be repeated for every follicle. To help minimise any discomfort, we will place some numbing cream on the area to be treated.

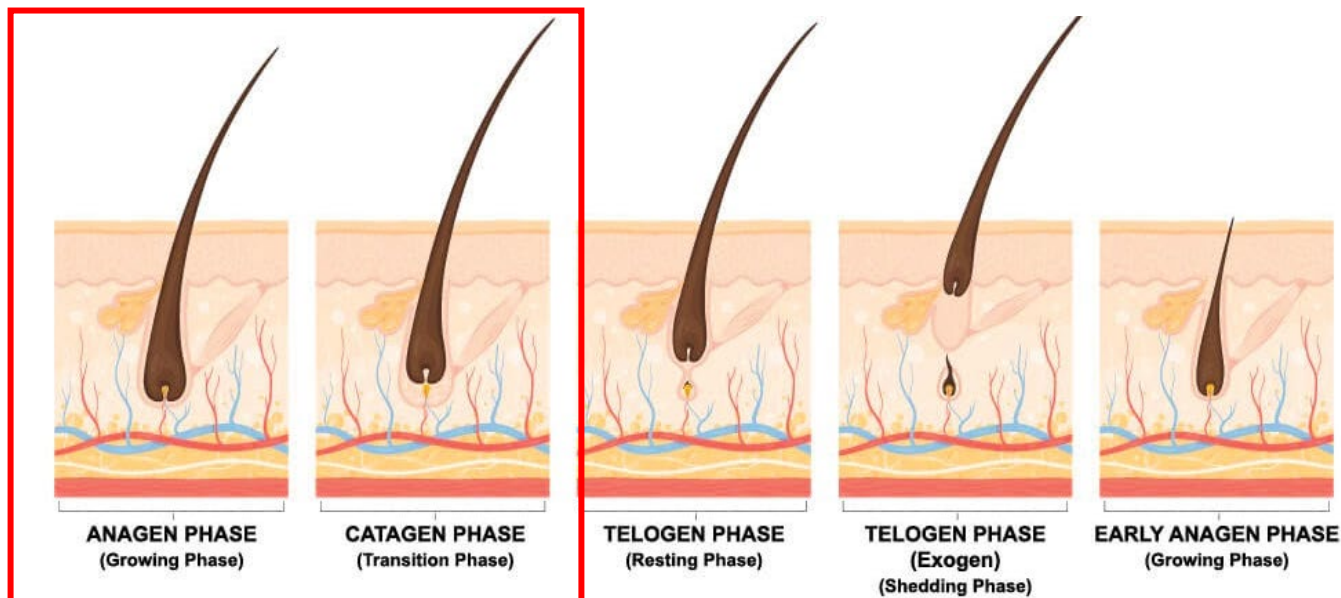
What happens when I arrive for my operation?

On the day of your treatment, we would recommend that you have a small amount to eat and drink and visit the toilet before we start and that you bring along something to distract you whilst the procedure is taking place (e.g. a phone, tablet, gaming device, book, or earphones). You will be given some local anaesthetic cream to apply either at home, or as soon as you arrive in the hospital. We will need to allow 30 minutes or so for this to take effect so this will be a good opportunity for you to have something to eat.

Consent

We will remind you of the expected outcomes of the surgery but will also discuss the potential risks involved. We will then ask you to sign a consent form confirming that you have understood what has been said, and that you are happy to proceed. It is also important that you tell us if you have any allergies, bleeding disorders or metal implants.

Hair growth cycle



Hair growth begins in your hair follicles, which are contained within your skin. As you can see from the diagram above, it also goes through different phases in a growth cycle. Electrolysis only works when the hair follicle is in the first two growth phases (boxed in red). Because the hair follicle is hidden within the skin, we cannot know what stage of growth a particular hair is at. This is why we have a series of appointments, each time checking to see which hairs have re-grown, and treating them again. In theory, the number of hairs re-growing should be less and less each time, until most or all of the hairs have gone. Thankfully, hairs on your head grow quite quickly, allowing us to book your appointments reasonably close together.

About the treatment

Before we start treatment, we will need to get you in to a comfortable position, either lying down on your back with your head turned to the side, or sitting up slightly. The hair in the area to be treated will be trimmed to a short length to help with visibility and the skin will be cleansed.

Once you are comfortable, and have your entertainment ready, the treatment can begin. The practitioner will very carefully examine your skin and slowly start treating the follicles. This will be done by passing a very fine wire into the follicle, alongside the hair (see figure 1 on page 3). The wire and follicle are so small that a magnifying glass is needed to be able to see them. It is important to remember that the wire is not going into the skin like an injection, but alongside the hair instead. Once inserted, a small, brief electrical current will be applied to the base of the follicle, destroying the follicle's ability to make more hairs. This lasts for less than half a second. This process will be repeated as many times as possible in the time remaining or until you feel like you have had enough. If you feel at any point you would like to pause the treatment, or even stop altogether, then just raise your hand and tell the practitioner.

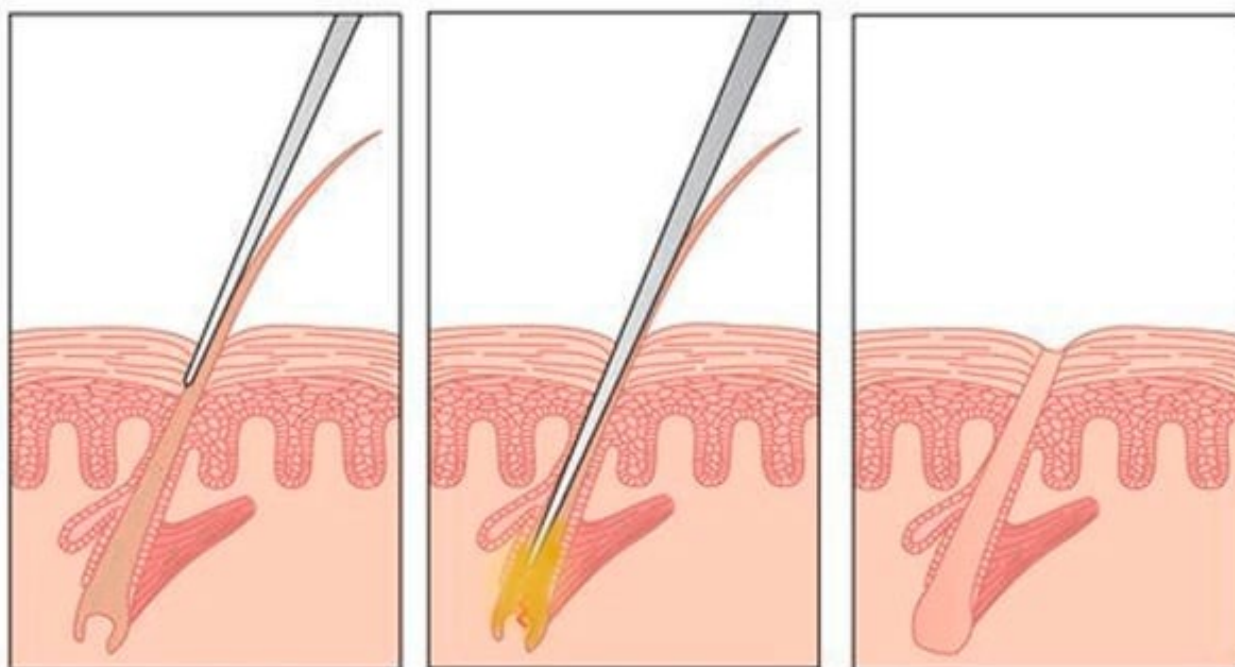


Figure 1 - wire insertion

After the treatment

Once the treatment has ended, you will be asked to take a moment to make sure you are feeling ok, and then you will be free to go home.

Care at home afterwards

It is normal to experience some redness or tenderness over the area for a day or two after treatment. This can be soothed with some cooling aloe vera gel that we will provide you with, and should return to normal within a day or two. Occasionally, the treatment can cause some scabbing. It is important that this is not scratched or picked at, as this can lead to extra scarring or even infection.

Follow-up Care

It is possible that you will need to attend for between 6 and 10 appointments. These will be at approximately monthly intervals. The sessions should shorten in duration as the number of hair follicles needing treated reduces.

What can go wrong?

As with most hospital treatments, electrolysis is not without its risks and potential complications. The most common complications are usually minor and easily treated. These include skin infection, swelling or a small amount of local bleeding from the follicle.

Any more questions?

Please do not hesitate to contact the specialist nurse on the number below if you have any questions or concerns.

Public Transport and Travel Information

Bus details available from:

Lothian Buses on 0131 555 6363 www.lothianbuses.co.uk

Traveline Scotland on 08712002233 or www.travelinescotland.com

Train details available from:

National Rail Enquiries on 03457 484 950 or www.nationalrail.co.uk

Interpretation and Translation

Your GP will inform us of any interpreting requirements you have before you come to hospital and we will provide an appropriate interpreter. This leaflet may be made available in a larger print, Braille or your community language.

Contact Telephone Numbers

Appointments: Sarah McColl, Service Co-ordinator – 0131 312 0631

Patient care: Kerr Clapperton, Specialist Nurse – 07854 232 594

