

THERE IS NOTHING I LIKE doing less than waxing. In fact, sometimes when I'm lying there on the table, I try to distract myself by listing the places I'd rather be. Work. The gym. My mother's. (Maybe not.) I must have done it a hundred times, each session as brutal as the last. In fact, whenever I go to a new salon, such is the waxer's horror at my acute wincing that I am repeatedly asked if this is my first time.

It's for this very reason that I've been watching the hair-removal world like a hawk, waiting for someone to come up with something that doesn't have me popping questionable amounts of painkillers in the build up. So I'm hoping that the new GentleMax by Candela is the answer. It works 25 per cent faster than other lasers on the scene and the makers say it can be used on every hair type, body part and skin colour. This is somewhat revolutionary as many current lasers either struggle to detect fine hair or can't deal with the pigmentation of dark skin. But the thing that really differentiates it (and this is the bit I'm most interested in), is the patented Dynamic Cooling Device. This impressive machine sprays liquid nitrogen onto your skin just as the laser zaps the root of the hair. The freezing temperature of the liquid nitrogen cancels out the intense heat of the laser, which makes the whole process virtually pain-free.

First off, I'm surprised by how hefty the machine is. It takes up most of the treatment room and there's a systematic whirring and clicking from the two sizable tanks of cryogen (the technical term for the liquid nitrogen) that are revving up inside. The hand-held component emits a laser directly into the first four millimetres of skin to burn and kill the root of each hair. Impressive but a little frightening, so I'm somewhat zealous about clamping the tinted safety glasses onto my face.

Extreme Beauty

Pain-Free Hair Zapping

Jessica Hough tries out a new laser treatment that promises to take the heat out of hair removal

My body barely has time to register any pain before it's numbed again'

I'm pleasantly surprised when Pam, my clinician, explains that I get to choose the pain level and she'll increase the amount of cryogen as needed. Obviously, I tell her to crank it up to the max. She begins to work along my bikini line, watching my reaction to check I'm comfortable and asking me to comment on what I can feel. It differs across areas, but mainly it's a sharp heat followed by a burst of cold. It reminds me of the Heaf test we had to have at school before BCG inoculations, but without the dramatic build up of the girls in front of you pretending to faint.

My body barely has time to register any pain before it's numbed again, so I can see

why they're so proud of this addition. It's all over within 30 minutes, without inflammation or redness, and I'm told I won't need to come back for six weeks or so. It's hard to predict how many sessions each person needs, as it's dependent on your hair cycle, but I figure it's less frequent than waxing and a lot more bearable.

It's not cheap, but when I calculate the cost of every wax I've ever had and the fact I'm back to square one the very next month, the longevity of laser makes it far more financially savvy. Pam likens it to the difference between property buying and renting – in which case, I tell her I'm glad to be on the hair-removal ladder.

The facts

GentleMax by Candela costs from £480 for a full bikini (six sessions). Call 0845 521 0689 to find a clinic. Jessica visited The Holborn Clinic, 020 7404 0072.



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