

INFORMATION ABOUT LASER TREATMENT OF TATTOOS

How do tattoo lasers work?

Tattoo lasers produce a very short burst of intense but gentle laser light. This light has the proper wavelength ("color") to be absorbed by the tattoo pigment. (Pigment is any "colored" substance.) Absorption causes "photothermolysis", or heat damage, preferentially to the implanted tattoo pigment without significantly damaging surrounding skin tissue. Laser treatment usually leaves other adjacent tissue relatively intact, so that healing occurs with normal pigmentation, or skin color in most patients.

Strimling Dermatology, Laser & Vein Institute utilizes one or more Q-switched lasers to treat tattoos.

Are there other ways to treat my tattoo?

In the past, tattoos have been removed by excision (cutting), salabrasion, dermabrasion, and chemical peels.

Excision (cutting out the tattoo) may be an acceptable alternative for some small tattoos, although excision always causes scarring.

Scars can grow larger than expected (e.g. keloid scar) or be itchy and/or painful / tender. Salabrasion, i.e. rubbing salt into the tattoo under pressure, produces inflammation, removes tattoo pigment unevenly, may require several attempts and cause scarring.

Dermabrasion, which involves removing the upper layers of skin and tattoo with a rapidly rotating brush or similar instrument is essentially similar to salabrasion and also usually causes some degree of scarring or skin color change. Chemical peeling is not very helpful, less predictable as to results, often requires multiple treatments and usually causes scarring when used as a tattoo removal technique.

Are there any reasons why I may not be a candidate for tattoo laser therapy? - Some tattoo colors respond better than others, requiring fewer treatments. Blue-blacks, dark colors, reds and greens usually respond well to one or more of the Q-switched tattoo lasers. Other colors may be less predictable, responding more slowly or not completely or unsatisfactorily or not at all.

Also, laser tattoo removal treatment may be less effective in moderately dark or black skin or for unknown reasons.

What should I expect from this laser treatment? - Laser treatment of tattoos requires several sessions; each given usually every 6-8 weeks or more apart. Waiting 6-8 weeks gives your body the time needed to "carry away" the laser damaged tattoo pigment, which you see as fading of the tattoo. Because this fading process is somewhat individual and tattoo ink is not standardized, and the tattoo's depth depends on how long ago and how deep it was applied, we cannot guarantee 100% complete removal of all tattoos.

In general, amateur tattoos respond best (and more quickly) in 3 - 8 sessions. Professional tattoos may take 6 - 12 treatments, or more.

You may have some temporary "pin point" bleeding points immediately after each treatment (and later, crusts or scabs). Most people have some swelling of the treated site(s) for a day or two or more after treatment. Patients may also experience some temporary discoloration or reddening of the skin near the treatment site(s). These are normal and expected and do not represent an infection.

Are there any potential adverse effects? - There may be lightening of the skin for up to a few months after treatment, after which normal pigmentation usually returns. Occasionally, removing the tattoo "unmasks" mild scarring or lightened skin already present, but not readily visible before tattoo removal, that was due to the original tattooing process, itself.

Scarring is a risk with any procedure, but with the tattoo lasers we use, this risk is very low (under 1 %).

Will the treatment hurt? - The laser causes mild discomfort. Patients describe the feeling of a laser pulse as "being snapped by a rubber band", or like "the slight sting of a mosquito bite." Most patients tolerate laser treatment with no need for anesthesia.

If you need some, the doctor will discuss the right kind to use (e.g. an injection of "local", or applying a cream one hour before treatment).

How long will the laser treatment last? - The time your laser treatment will take depends on the size and number of tattoos and how well you tolerate the treatment. Most sessions last less than 15-30 minutes.

What safety measures are needed during laser treatment? - The laser produces a very bright beam of light. Everyone must wear protective eyewear while the laser is in use. If there is hair near the treatment area, we recommend you shave this area on the morning of the procedure. If this is not possible, we may moisten it with water or a water-based lubricant to prevent heat build-up.

Even if the hair is singed by the laser, it will grow back normally.

What will I have to do to take care of the treated area?

We provide each patient we treat with written aftercare instructions, which clearly describe appropriate care for the period after treatment. We encourage each patient to read these before leaving our office, and to let us know if there are any questions.

Will I be able to swim in chlorinated water? - Yes, once any crusts that may form have fallen off (usually about 5-10 days).

However, you may shower the following day.

Will I have to stay out of the sun? - No. However, you should use sunscreen (SPF 30 or >) to protect the treated area if outdoors.

What should I do if I still have questions? - Ask us! We don't want you to consider laser treatment until you are completely comfortable. We encourage you to bring any questions or concerns to our attention. We will do our best to answer them.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SKIN CARE AFTER TATTOO LASER TREATMENT

You have had laser treatment of your tattoo(s). They are now discolored (and you may have “pin point” bleeding); if so a crust (or scab) usually forms, lasting several days. Please read the following carefully. This information will let you know what to expect, and how to care for the treated area.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- ◆ The treated area(s) may swell somewhat. This is caused by the laser energy, and represents inflammation, and not infection. It is a normal and expected part of the healing process.
- ◆ While the laser leaves the skin surface mostly intact, a fine crust (or scab) usually forms and is normal, expected and represents healing and does not mean the area will scar. (Crusting may not necessarily form.) Keep the healing area moist with an antibiotic ointment (see below).
- ◆ Once crusts go away, the body gradually continues the fading process for several weeks, so that final results of each treatment will not be seen until 6-8 weeks later.

CARE OF THE TREATED AREA(S)

- ◆ Apply a thin coat of antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin or Polysporin) to the treated area once or twice a day for 7 days, or until the surface looks healed.
- ◆ Care should be taken to prevent trauma to the treated area for the first week after treatment. Avoid manipulating the skin in any way. Do not rub, scratch, or pick the area(s).
- ◆ Makeup is permitted, but be very gentle when applying or removing it.
- ◆ You may get the treated area wet, but be very gentle when drying it. Pat dry after showering. Swimming is generally permitted after 2-3 days or once all crusts (if any) have fallen off (usually, 5-10 days).
- ◆ Minimize sun exposure, as best as possible, for at least 1 month before and after treatment. Wear protective clothing (hat, etc.) and a high SPF (at least SPF 30) sunscreen to protect the treated area from direct sun exposure.
- ◆ Avoid spray tanning to the treatment area. If you are spray-tanned, please exfoliate to help remove the tanning product in the treatment area.
- ◆ You may help relieve any swelling by applying an ice pack wrapped in a soft cloth. Leave this on the treated area for 10-15 minutes per each hour for several or more hours.

PRECAUTIONS

- ◆ Do not use aspirin, aspirin containing medications or alcohol for at least 1 week before and for the first 2 days after treatment. Take Tylenol or another pain reliever that contains no aspirin or ibuprofen, if needed.
- ◆ If the treated area becomes increasingly tender, red, swollen and/or purulent (having pus), contact our office immediately as this may represent an infection that may require treatment.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, PLEASE CONTACT US @ 702-243-6400.

TATTOO LASER REMOVAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Tattoo lasers produce a very short burst of intense but gentle laser light of the proper wavelength ("color") and other parameters necessary for selective absorption by the tattoo pigment. (Pigment is any "colored" substance.) Absorption causes "photothermolysis", or heat damage, preferentially to the implanted tattoo pigment without significantly damaging surrounding skin tissue. Laser treatment usually leaves other adjacent tissue relatively intact, so that healing occurs with normal pigmentation (i.e normal skin color) in most patients, as opposed to alternate removal techniques. Strimling Dermatology, Laser & Vein Institute utilizes one or more Q-switched lasers to treat tattoos.

Although laser surgery is effective in most cases, no guarantees can be made that a specific patient will benefit from treatment. Many conditions for which lasers are useful need a series of treatments to reach desired or optimal improvement. Some conditions lighten, but don't disappear, despite multiple treatments. Rarely, some may respond minimally or not at all to this treatment.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS / COMPLICATIONS OF LASER SURGERY? The most common side effects /complications are:

- Pain / Tenderness - The laser causes mild discomfort. Patients describe the feeling of a laser pulse as "being snapped by a rubber band". Most patients tolerate laser treatment without anesthesia. However, if you need some, the doctor will discuss the right kind to use (for example an injection of "local", or applying a cream approximately an hour before treatment).
- Crusting of the Healing Wound – Often, multiple pinpoint crusts or a superficial wound forms which requires care, this does not mean infection. Using Q-tips, gauze or fingers, cleanse gently twice daily with a mild / soap-less cleanser (e.g. Aquanil or Cetaphil) diluted with water, followed by application of an antibiotic ointment like Bacitracin or Polysporin or Aquafor healing ointment to minimize crusts and hasten healing. Crusts usually heal in 5-10 days without long-term adverse effects. Again, they are normal and do not represent infection.
- Skin Pigment (Color) Changes – In some patients the treated area loses pigmentation (becomes hypopigmented) and turns temporarily lighter than the surrounding skin. This color change tends to return to normal in 2-4 weeks. Multiple treatments, as is usually needed, may cause pigment loss to persist and take longer to heal, as much as 6-8 months or more. The small risk of permanent pigment loss is minimized by allowing adequate healing time between treatments. Increased pigmentation (hyperpigmentation, i.e. skin color darkening) with healing is very rare with our tattoo laser(s). Such increased pigment usually fades in 2-6 months. Such reactions are more common in darker skin types than light complexioned individuals. We advise avoiding direct, unprotected (i.e. without using a full strength (SPF 30 or >) sunscreen) sun exposure of the treated site(s). Swimming in chlorinated water is permitted once any scabs have fallen off (5-10 days). However, showering is allowed starting the following day.
- Bruising – Rare, slight, which generally lasts 5-10 days before going away, (if this happens at all).
- Swelling – may occur for up to 1-3 days; Use ice packs 5-10 minutes/hour for several hours as needed. This swelling is normal and does not mean infection or scarring. Any swelling usually lasts up to several hours, but may rarely last several days or more.
- Skin Fragility – Do not rub or pick treated areas. However, makeup may be applied at once, if so desired. Apply and remove it gently.
- Scarring - Because the laser light penetrates very little into the skin and is "specific for" (i.e. specifically absorbed by and damaging to) the tattoo ink with minimal damage to surrounding skin, scarring is rare and less likely than other older removal techniques. However, the laser may also "unmask" or make more evident prior scarring from previous non-laser treatment/s of the lesions; which if present may be less visible until laser clearing of the lesion/condition. To minimize any chances of scarring, we advise careful adherence to all postoperative instructions.
- Systemic allergic reactions possibly to tattoo ink particle antigens resulting from laser tattoo removal – rare.
- Eye Protection - Laser energy can harm exposed eyes. We therefore provide safety eyewear to be worn while the laser is being used.
- Persistence of Lesion (Tattoo) - Multiple treatments (3-12 or more) are required. Blue-black tattoos respond best to laser treatment, but because tattoo inks are not standardized, results cannot be guaranteed. Other tattoo colors may respond less well to treatment, or not at all.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read "Information of Laser Treatment of Tattoos", "Instructions for Skin Care after Tattoo Laser Treatment" and this foregoing Tattoo Laser Consent Form, and that I feel I have been adequately informed of the risks of laser surgery as well as of alternate methods of treatment and all of questions have been answered. I hereby consent to laser surgery, performed by Dr. Strimling and/or his associates / assistant(s).

I consent to the taking of photographs before, during and after the procedure. These photographs will belong to the doctor and may be used for scientific purposes, including lecture presentations or publication in medical or scientific texts or periodicals. They will not be used for advertising without my express written consent that they may be used for this purpose.

DATE: _____

TIME: _____ AM / PM

Patient's Signature

Patient's Representative (if signature of parent or guardian is needed)

Relationship to Patient

Witness