

TATTOO LASER TREATMENT

PATIENT ADVICE SHEET

www.skinlaserclinic.co.uk

HOW DOES THE LASER WORK?

The laser uses a powerful light beam to damage the ink under the skin. There is no cutting of the skin. The tattoo ink soaks up the beam's energy and gets extremely hot for a fraction of a second. This is enough to break up the ink causing it to fade slowly. Over the next few weeks the body can clear these small particles of ink. When these are out of the way the laser beam can shine down to the next layer of ink. It is usual to allow at least a month between treatments.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

The laser light can seriously damage eyes, so everyone in the laser suite will have to wear protective goggles. This is an important safety precaution. You risk blindness by attempting to view the treatment without goggles, this also applies to anyone you ask to accompany you during treatment.

The laser fires in rapid bursts, these feel a bit like the spatter of hot fat from a frying pan. It is uncomfortable, like having the tattoo put on. You may choose to use an anaesthetic cream on the skin before each treatment. Please ask the doctor for further details.

The machine is noisy, and you will hear the crack of the beam hitting the ink. The tattoo will feel hot for a while afterwards, and it will probably be red and swollen for the rest of the day. Very dark, or large professional tattoos, will remain tender and swollen for a few days. Occasionally this is followed by a scab or crust. The tattoo will not look a lot different, but over the next few weeks it will fade a little. This may not be obvious until you return to compare it with the photographs.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Scarring is most unlikely but does sometimes occur. If it does occur it is usually in the form of some change in texture of the skin. This is more likely if you pick any scabs. There can also be some loss of natural tanning ability in the treated area, which usually improves with time. The chances of it happening can be reduced by keeping the area as pale as possible throughout the course of treatment.

Not all tattoo inks respond and certain colours can get worse. Heavy professional tattoos in particular may not completely go, with some colour remaining and the rest left very faint. Modern colours are pigment-based inks and made of potentially toxic chemicals; the consequences of treating these with laser light are unknown. Photographs can be seen on the website: skinlaserclinic.co.uk

SOME ADVICE ON CARING FOR YOUR TREATED TATTOO

1. A suntan gets in the way of the laser light so avoid the sun, or use a strong sun block, before and during treatment. Keep the area to be treated as pale as possible.
2. Be gentle with the treated area until it has settled down so as to minimise the risk of scars. It should not need a dressing as long as you can resist picking and scratching.
3. Blisters should be left to resolve naturally, you might have to protect them with dressings if you are likely to knock or burst them. This is important to avoid scarring.
4. If the treated area does not improve from day to day then telephone 020 7435 7521 for advice.

Treatments start at £80. Treatments should be at least a month apart and professional tattoos will take at least 8 treatments. Complicated cases may require assessment by a Consultant Dermatologist, this costs £200