

## Laser Tattoo Removal Post-Treatment Advice

The area to be treated should be free from make-up, perfume, deodorant and body or face creams. The area should not be sun-tanned. Use of sun beds or exposure to strong sunlight is not advised prior to treatment. Dark suntans must be left to fade before treatment can start and fake tan should not be applied.

A medical history is taken at consultation, but we rely on you to inform us of any changes to this. We need to know of any medication you are taking, even those bought from a chemist or herbal remedies.

The immediate whitening of the treated area is the reaction of the ink to the absorption of the laser light energy creating steam within the surface of your skin, this usually only lasts for several minutes.

### Post-treatment skincare

Post treatment skin care divides into three areas:

#### Short term

Immediately after treatment, the area is best left alone completely for 24 hours.

After 24 hours antiseptic ointment or 1% hydrocortisone cream (available 'over the counter' at most chemists) can be used up to 3 times a day for 7 days. A sterile dressing should be used to cover the treated area for at least the first 3 days. It may be necessary to use a dressing for the duration of healing to protect the area if there is risk of damage from treated area rubbing on clothes (e.g. on waistband).

Cold compresses and ice packs may be used as needed after the laser treatment for any discomfort or inflammation, you can also take paracetamol for relief but not aspirin. This is because aspirin thins the blood, can increase the chance of bruising and bleeding, and can hamper the healing process.

Aloe Vera gel can also help improve skin comfort and reduce swelling or post-treatment redness.

Do not pick or rub, picking at scabs or allowing the treated area to get scraped increases your chance of getting an infection and also increases your chance of developing a scar.

#### Short to medium term

Within the first 24 hours the area may become reddened and swollen which will settle in a few days and may feel similar to sunburn. The skin is fragile and needs gentle handling. Blisters sometimes appear and may be large. Do not worry, as this is not unusual.

Blisters usually last anywhere from 2-3 days to 2 weeks, depending on skin sensitivity. There are some rules that must be followed to avoid further complications:

**Do not disturb the blister**, this is nature's "Elastoplast" and the skin will heal naturally under the blister. The blister will dry to form a "crust" and it will be shed by the skin when it is no longer required. The new skin will look "shiny" and will take a few weeks to return to a normal look and feel. Always:

- Wear clean, loose fitting clothes where possible
- Keep the area clean and dry. After washing, pat the area dry – do not rub
- If the blister bursts, do not panic – however it is important to keep the area clean. You can apply Savlon or Vaseline
- Apply a non-adherent dressing if advised to do so
- Do not use make-up, perfumed products, toners, astringents or soap on the treated area until healed
- Be careful with sprays, such as deodorants
- Do not shave over a blistered area
- Exercise is OK after treatment, considering all other after care instructions are practised but avoid excess sweating for 48 hours after treatment.
- Do not soak the treated area until the skin has completely healed. - hot tubs, swimming pools or

baths are not recommended as this increase the chances of infection. Showers are OK, but don't allow the shower steam to hit the affected area. Do not keep treated area under running water or have the water too hot. Remember to pat dry, don't rub the area.

- Hydrate the body by drinking plenty of water,
- Due to the dehydrating effect of the laser treatment, itching is very common. Aquaphor, hydrocortisone cream, or vitamin E ointment can be used to the treated area.
- Call the studio immediately if the area looks infected or you are concerned in any way

### **Long term**

Once post-treatment skin changes have subsided and the skin texture has returned to normal you will be ready for a follow up treatment. There may still be some reddening if the immune response is still active and, in any case, you must leave at least 4 weeks before any follow up.

You should take the following steps to reduce the risks of long term pigment disturbance:

Always wear at least a Factor 25+ sun block and reapply frequently, or better still cover with a dressing

Do not expose the treated area of your skin to UV light before and between treatments (natural sunlight and sun beds)

Do not apply fake/ spray tan to the area to be treated

There is also a risk, increasing with the number of treatments, of textural skin changes that can lead to scarring. If, after the skin in the treatment area has settled down, it feels lumpy or thickened, the matter should be raised prior to your next treatment. Depending on the situation, the clinic may recommend a longer treatment interval and/or the use of a topical silica gel product.

### **Adverse Reactions**

As different people react to laser tattoo removals differently, it's important that you keep a look out for skin changes after undergoing treatment. It is normal to experience scabs, blisters, crusts and swelling for a fortnight.

However if you have any extreme reactions or experience any of the following symptoms you have to immediately seek medical attention:

Persistent pain, which won't go away with over-the-counter pain medication.

The treated area looks infected (yellow or honey coloured oozing and crusting)

Fever over 100°C.

If the treated tattoo area becomes swollen

Excessive bleeding or any drainage.

Although times can vary, complete healing usually takes 4-6 weeks, the process which breaks down the tattoo ink begins 2 weeks after the laser treatment. The ink will continue to evacuate until about the 6 week post treatment mark. Ideally, treatments should be scheduled 6 weeks apart.

### **Laser Tattoo Removal Follow Up**

Follow after care advice and keep good standards of hygiene

Follow up treatments should be scheduled every 6 weeks.

Consistent repeated treatments will produce the best resolution of tattoos or pigmented lesions.