



## **Laser Tattoo Removals Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***What type of laser do you use?***

We use a Sapphire Q-switched KTP/ YAG laser, this type of laser delivers the energy quickly and allows for the best results for tattoo removal. Q-switched lasers are the only lasers that should be used for laser tattoo removal.

Q-Switched stands for 'quality-switched laser' and this laser targets short pulses of light energy at a tattoo which shatters the pigments into tiny particles.

### ***How does the Laser treatment work on tattoos?***

This particular laser produces a very high power in quick pulses. The light energy produced tends to pass through normally pigmented skin and specifically targets the pigment on the tattoo ink deep in the dermis layer. As the ink absorbs this light energy, the ink breaks down into smaller particles which is then evacuated from the body through normal immune response. As the ink particles are removed, the tattoo begins to fade.

### ***Is the tattoo removal laser dangerous?***

Tattoo removal lasers are very safe for use when used by a trained laser operator with proper safety equipment (goggles to protect the eyes).

The radiation emitted by a tattoo removal laser is non-ionizing and carries no risk of cancer or other abnormal cell growth.

### ***Does it hurt?***

Lasers will cause some discomfort and it is usual to experience a small amount of pain in the area afterwards (like you do after having a tattoo)The laser pulses have been likened to having your skin 'pinged' with an elastic band. this is usually tolerated by most people without any anaesthetic.

However, some areas can prove more sensitive than others, especially around the ankles or the shoulder blade. Fortunately, the discomfort does decrease as treatment progresses and the tattooing fades. In our experience most patients will tolerate the discomfort of treatment very well but we can provide local anaesthetic cream if required.

### ***What happens immediately after treatment?***

Straight after treatment the area will feel hot and skin will form small white 'blisters', these are water vapour spots created by the intense heat under the skin, and might be flat or slightly raised. This is due to the release of microscopic steam bubbles in your skin. This change usually lasts no more than a few minutes before it disappears, this is perfectly normal and a good sign that the treatment is working.

The white spots start to fade quickly and the remaining ink will start to show through.

### ***Will the Laser Treatment leave me with a scar?***

Not normally, It is very unusual to develop any scarring but possible, especially with poor aftercare (there is a reported 5% chance of scarring following tattoo removal treatments). The laser operated at Poison Ink is specially designed for the purpose of Tattoo Removals. The light pulses it emits are only in contact with the skin for literally billionths of a second, there is not enough time for a significant build up of heat in the skin.

### ***What are the other possible side effects?***

Most side effects of laser procedures are temporary, generally few and to be expected. Normally symptoms will subside within a week and may include:

- **Localised Swelling and Redness** - The most common side effects and could feel similar to sunburn for a day or two
- **Blistering** - Don't worry when blistering occurs, this is part of the normal healing process and the skin will heal nicely afterwards as long as you do not pick and scratch the scab.
- **Infection** - Following each of the treatment sessions there is always a high risk of infection to the area. It is very important that you maintain a good level of hygiene.
- **Scabbing** - If you do experience blistering and/or bleeding, when the scab forms as with any healing wound it is very important not to pick any scabbing as this could cause scarring and impair further treatments.
- **Hypopigmentation** - Loss of skin colour may occur. But, normal skin tone should return within 6 – 12 months following your last treatment session. Very occasionally the hypopigmentation effect can be permanent or pigment will return in patches. As a general guideline, the darker the skin and the more treatments required, the more risk there is of long term de-pigmentation.
- **Hyperpigmentation** - An abundance of colour in the skin at the treated area. This problem is more common in patients with darker skin types and patients with fresh tans are also more at risk. Hyperpigmentation is usually always a temporary effect that responds to topical bleaching therapy and resolves over time.
- **Sunburn**. - A risk that follows treatment, It is important that you keep the area covered in a minimum factor 25 suncream at all times when the area is not covered by clothing or a sterile bandage.
- **Lack of complete pigment removal** – Some colours cannot be treated, traces (or ghosting) of colour pigmentation may remain after treatment.
- **Slight pin-prick bleeding or weeping** - This is all normal and nothing to worry about.
- **Allergic Reaction** - A possible development an allergic reaction to your tattoo dye as it is released into your system.

Detailed written aftercare instructions will be provided at your consultation - PLEASE follow them to the letter and do not listen to friends who inevitably will have well intentioned advice. The care routine is different to having a tattoo - please follow the provided aftercare instructions.

### ***How long does the treatment take?***

The treatment can take between 5 and 30 minutes, longer sessions could cause too much trauma to the skin so are not recommended, this means that larger tattoos need to be treated in several separate sittings.

Depending on the tattoo and the result required (removal or cover up) up to 12 or more sessions may be required. Do not be surprised, however, if the removal of your tattoo takes more sessions than that. Each person and each tattoo is unique so the number of treatment sessions you will need can vary.

These sessions will be between 8 - 10 weeks apart. Sometimes 12 weeks can be needed depending on your body's capabilities to dispel the ink and skin healing properties.

The removal of a tattoo is a long process and clients are advised to be patient.

### ***Can I schedule to come back sooner than 8 weeks?***

No, The targeted ink takes time to break down and be removed by the body. Visits are scheduled 8 weeks apart to allow the body to absorb and dissolve the disrupted ink.

### ***Can I have just a part of my tattoo removed?***

Yes. Our lasers are very accurate. We can take the face off your pin-up girl to have it redone. We can take just the name off pieces or remove misspelt letters.

## ***Can you remove all colours?***

No. Laser tattoo removal works best on tattoos of black ink that was sparsely applied to fair skin. As the laser is attracted to the darker areas, fair coloured skin gives a greater contrast allowing the laser to work more effectively. Black ink is also able to absorb the full spectrum of light.

A wide range of other colours can usually be removed successfully or lightened to a large degree: Brown, Red\* (*IMPORTANT! Some people can have an allergic reaction to red ink particles absorbed into to body*), Orange, Darker Green, Blue, Purple

The most difficult colours to remove are pastel colours such as: Light Green, Pale Blue, Teal, Turquoise, Pink\*

These colours may be lightened, but it is difficult to remove them completely. If you are looking to cover-up your tattoo with a new design these pastel colours are usually easy to cover.

Usually untreatable Colours: White\*, Yellow, Light green, Skin tones, Fluorescent or Ultra-Violet\*

White and yellow ink does fade over time and become less noticeable, be cautious of anyone who guarantees to remove all traces of green ink.

### **\*Colours with potential problems**

Occasionally the tattoo may go darker where the ingredients in certain ink colours carbonise. This irreversible darkening is sometimes seen with the following colours:

White, Pink, Flesh Tone colours, Fluorescent or Ultra-Violet, Light Brown, Red

Although these complications are rare, it is one of the reasons we insist on a patch test for each colour in the tattoo so that potentially rare complications can be predicted before undergoing laser treatment.

We will discuss your individual tattoo at the consultation and if you have colours that do not respond.

## ***Will my tattoo be completely removed?***

Possibly, modern lasers can give fantastic results but there are no guarantees. Sometimes the total elimination of the tattoo is not possible despite the use of the most advanced tattoo removal equipment. The success of the treatments depends on more than just the type of tattoo ink used as mentioned in the previous question *Can you remove all colours?*, there are too many factors that can effect treatment results such as:

- Age of tattoo
- Application method
- Type of ink used
- Depth of ink
- Depth of colour
- Area of tattoo
- Your healing ability
- Skin type

Tattoos that are carried out by professionals are usually more difficult to remove as they contain more pigment colours and there is usually much more detail in the design. Often with a professional tattoo, the pigment colours are applied more deeply into the skin, and because of this may take more treatment sessions.

This is not to say that amateur tattoos are not applied as deep as professional ones, sometimes amateur tattooists create pocket of inks that are too deep and extremely difficult to eradicate completely.

You may be surprised but there is no recognised international standard for the manufacture of tattoo ink, sometimes inks can be mixed with other unknown compounds. If your tattoo contains iron pigment for example, this could result in immediate pigment darkening, with the laser treated area turning black. This is another reason why we insist that a patch test is always carried out on your tattoo before any course of treatments can begin. so that potentially rare complications of laser treatment like this, or any other, can be predicted.

Tattoo lightening may continue for several months after the last treatment session.

## ***How much does it cost?***

Prices are between £30 - £60 per session depending on size of the tattoo and length of the sitting, single or multiple colours. the pigment colours used, and whether the tattoo was carried out by a professional or an amateur.

We will be able give you a full quote during your consultation. A consultation takes approx 20 minutes and is free of charge.

## ***Am I suitable for treatment?***

Certain medical conditions and medications would make exposure to the laser treatment dangerous to you.

### **Patients that should not be treated:**

- Pregnancy, or a patient trying to become pregnant. (*There is an unknown but possible risk of transfer of ink to foetus. Additional slight risk of miscarriage due to stress of procedure.*)
- Breast feeding, (*again because of unknown but possible risk of transfer of ink to baby.*)
- Chemotherapy within last 6 months because of sensitivity to light and compromised status of immune system.
- Users of Accutane or Tretinoin-Retin A within last 6 months for the treatment of acne or other dermatological conditions.
- Type I Diabetes
- Bleeding Disorders
- Anyone with an immune system disorder.
- Active Infections or inflammatory skin conditions at the treatment site
- Tanned or sunburned skin in area of tattoo
- Thrombocytopenia
- Peripheral Vascular Disease
- Anaemia
- Rheumatoid Arthritis/Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Chronic Disease (*Crohn's Disease, IBD, etc.*)
- Renal Failure (*Acute or Chronic*)
- Malignancy
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Epilepsy (*because repeated consecutive flasher may induce a fit*)
- Collagen Vascular Diseases
- Users of St. John's Wort (*herbal remedy*) in the past 3 months
- Waxing, plucking, sugaring or threading depilation treatment of the area in the previous 4-6 weeks (*because the follicle has been removed*)
- Surgical metal pins or plates under tissue to be treated
- Wearing a pacemaker
- Taking any topical medication (e.g. hydrocortisone) or is wearing perfumes, deodorants, sun block, essential oils or other skin lotions (which could cause photosensitivity)

### **Patients to exercise extra precautions or care with:**

- Allergic reaction to ink, primarily red tattoo ink, may lead to increased chance of anaphylaxis. Either should not be treated or patient should take Claritin or Benadryl prior to treatment and for at least 3 days while they are healing.
- Skin types IV or above because of increased chance of hypo or hyperpigmentation and scarring.
- History of keloid scarring because of increased chance of further keloid scars.
- History of hyper or hypopigmentation
- Antibiotic use may cause an increase sensitivity to light.

**Other Conditions to Consider:**

- Chronic disease because of delay in healing. These patients may need longer between treatments to heal fully.
- Older clients may also take longer to heal.
- Immuno-compromised patients (ex. HIV, AIDS, Arthritis, Allergies) may take longer to heal or not flush out ink as well as other patients.
- We are not registered to treat clients under 18 years of age.

**IMPORTANT** - you cannot be treated if you are suntanned or have used a self tanning cream. The increased melanin in your skin will make you liable to burns. Please stay out of the sun for at least 6 weeks prior to treatment. This is for your safety. The lightening of skin colour is more common following sun exposure.

For further information, and to book a full consultation and patch test:



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