

Laser Tattoo Removal

Tattoos have been used since ancient times to beautify and individualize the body. However, our concept of beauty and sense of identity can change, and a tattoo may become a source of concern. Historically, techniques such as dermabrasion and excision have been utilized to remove unwanted tattoos. These techniques often cause undesirable scars. Fortunately, recent advances in laser technology now allow effective and safe tattoo removal with very little risk of scarring.



Lasers can be tuned so that they only damage specific targets in the skin. This principle is known as "selective photothermolysis." For example, certain lasers are tuned to damage only red blood cells and are thus useful for removing spider veins. Other lasers target pigmentation and can be used to remove unwanted brown spots or tattoo pigment. Multi-colored tattoos typically require several different lasers for maximum removal of pigment. We utilize the Alexandrite Laser & ND Yag Laser for tattoo removal.

The entire procedure takes approximately 10-20 minutes. For larger tattoos, a topical anesthetic cream can be applied to lessen the moderate discomfort associated with therapy. Protective eyewear is worn, and the tattoo is "painted" with the laser light. After treatment, a bandage is placed, and you are allowed to return to work or social activities with minimal restrictions.



Immediately following the procedure, the tattoo appears white due to the formation of microscopic gas bubbles. This white appearance fades after 30-60 minutes, and the entire tattoo appears lightly scratched, with a small amount of scabbing. Keep area clean and dry for the first 24 hours. Scabbing can be treated with dilute vinegar soaks and Bacitracin application 1-2 times each day, and the area heals in 2-3 weeks. The tattoo then fades gradually over 4-8 weeks. Treatment sessions are usually scheduled every 8 weeks, to allow adequate time for pigment re-absorption, healing, and fading.

Laser tattoo removal is extremely safe, with almost no risk of serious side effects. In the vast majority of patients, the tattoo is simply erased and treated skin looks exactly like surrounding skin. A minority of patients experience some textural or pigmentary changes. There have been a few reports of allergic reactions to the treated tattoo pigment, but this is extremely rare. Overall, the risk of complications is less than 1%.