



## **Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)**

### **Dr. Lowe's Facts about Laser Tattoo Removal**

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

Tattoo removal can be performed using a variety of techniques that include: surgery, chemicals, dermabrasion, or lasers. Laser tattoo removal involves often expensive technology, and it can be unpredictable and time consuming. Most of the lack of predictability with laser tattoo removal is the tattoo itself. What is the color of the tattoo? Was it professionally done? Most discontent with laser tattoo removal relates to the cost, discomfort, and time associated with laser tattoo treatments. Different lasers are required based on its color and the patient's skin type. Black or dark green tattoos on light skinned patients are usually the easiest tattoos to treat. The vast majority of laser tattoo removal takes 7-15 treatments to remove 90% of the tattoo. The laser focuses on thermal disruption of the tattoo dye treated multiple times. Most patients do not have the patience or finances to fully complete laser tattoo removal. .

#### **How effective are over-the-counter remedies?**

No over the counter remedies are effective at removing tattoos that have been present for some time. Medically prescribed topical skin regimens are usually ineffective as well. Many patients attempt to treat tattoos on their own, but very few patients see any noticeable improvement. Patients are best served to save their money for professional treatment of tattoo with surgery or laser. Most topical skin programs include a skin lightener (Hydroquinone) which may lighten a tattoo by 5-10%. Almost no over-the-counter treatment can provide effective dosing without a physician prescription or supervision. Your physician or health care professional can help you develop a legitimate treatment that is right for you. Tattoo removal is far more painful and expensive the cost of the tattoo itself.

#### **What do you think about micro-peels, micro-dermabrasion, or dermabrasion?**

Minimally invasive procedures are associated with minimal results. These procedures are best performed at a spa and are usually quite safe when performed by a professional. Most patients report small improvements in the tattoo color at best. It is difficult to know how many minimal treatments it would take to equal a standard laser treatment. Dermabrasion can be effective but requires anesthetic and leaves a unsightly scar. Dr. Lowe is committed to a true clinically effective tattoo treatment such as laser tattoo removal, and leaves the feel good treatments to the medical spas and aestheticians.

#### **What is the best laser for Tattoo removal?**

There are a number of lasers that are popular in laser tattoo removal. The most popular device is the Q switch ND-Yag laser. The laser can target black, blue, and red most effectively. Light green and yellow sometimes require a special laser to be effective. Laser tattoo removal is associated with significant discomfort and recovery. Some patients require local anesthetic and pain medication before or after treatment. No laser tattoo removal is effective with only one treatment. The cost of laser tattoo removal usually decreases as the tattoo fades and required less laser pulses.

#### **Are there substantial risks related to laser tattoo removal?**

All laser procedures are associated with a certain amount of risk. The risks are often associated with a patient's skin color or consistency. Darker skin types are at a higher risk of scarring and hypopigmentation (white spots). All laser procedures must be adjusted and formulated appropriately for skin types. The risk of laser tattoo removal include: poor aesthetic results, bruising, swelling, crusting, hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation, virus activation, and scarring. The deeper the laser treatment, the higher the risk. The deeper and more aggressive the laser treatment, the quicker the results in most cases. Laser tattoo removal is always a balance between "pain & gain." Your board certified plastic surgeon or dermatologist can assist you with choosing the treatment that is right for you.

**Is laser tattoo removal painful or time consuming?**

Laser tattoo removal is usually performed in the office with topical numbing cream. A limited number of patients require sedation in advance with a medication by mouth. The skin surface is treated quickly with small burst of intense laser light. A complete treatment usually requires 5-10 minutes per area to complete. Icing the area before and after the procedure is usually required. Most patients find the treatment to be uncomfortable but tolerable even with 2-3 passes over the skin. Patient should expect to experience red, peeling, crusting skin for 10-14 days in most cases, but results can vary with skin type. Most patients undergo 7-15 treatments at one to two month intervals until tattoo removal is maximized.

**How much improvement can I expect with each laser treatment?**

Laser tattoo removal required 7-15 treatments over the course of one year. It is one of the best options for tattoo removal because it can usually be worked into a person's busy schedule. It is not a treatment that will go unnoticed by friends and co-workers for the first several days. People will know that you had a treatment that looks much like a severe sun-burn. Even with this recovery, patients should only expect about a 5-8 percent improvement in tattoo color and quality. Laser tattoo removal will in no way provide instant results regardless of what anyone may claim or advertise. Nevertheless, it will in most cases slowly improve certain tattoos. The manufacture recommends up to 15 treatments spaced over one to two years for the best results.

**How much does laser tattoo removal cost?**

Laser tattoo removal involves complex laser technology. There are a variety of laser manufacturers that sell these devices. The cost to purchase a fully functional laser device is about 80-100K. Dr. Lowe usually leases the lasers in his practice. This ensures in most cases that the lasers are properly maintained, a laser technician is on site, and that patients have access to current technology. In most cases, approximately half the laser fee goes to pay for the laser lease and the other is profit. The cost of laser tattoo removal is determined by time, location, and complexity of treatment. The practice will be able to provide you with the cost of tattoo laser treatment after your professional consultation.

**When do you offer laser tattoo removal procedures?**

All patients considering laser treatment are required to see Dr. Lowe in consultation prior to the laser treatment. Some patient may not schedule a laser treatment for several months after consultation depending on their schedule or time of year. Our practice provides laser procedures at set time points throughout the calendar month. We usually perform laser treatments on Wednesday mornings every 2-3 weeks depending on demand. We will often open extra laser treatment days as demand increases. Patients may check with our office for the laser dates that are currently available. Some tattoos with certain colors require special laser arrangements.

**Can laser tattoo removal be combined with other surgical or nonsurgical procedures?**

Laser tattoo removal is rarely combined with other cosmetic treatments. Additional laser treatments such as Intense Pulse Light (IPL) or resurfacing can be used on occasion to improve the results. Other lasers such as the V-Beam (PDL) can often be added to limited areas without substantial additional risk. Most tattoo treatments require aggressive management that limits other treatment options. Some patients undergo BOTOX application on the same day as laser treatment when scheduled in advance. However, more lengthy cosmetic procedures such as injectable fillers (i.e. Juvederm) usually cannot be performed on the same day due to time limitations or safety concerns. Laser treatments must be performed efficiently and properly on laser days to ensure the most cost effective and safe patient care. Patients who are interested in doing more than one cosmetic treatment on the day of laser are encouraged to check with our office in advance.

### **What is the downtime related to laser tattoo removal?**

In our practice, Laser tattoo removal is performed by the physician. Dr. Lowe is committed to providing patients with an effective and safe laser treatment. The downtime associated with the typical treatment is 10-14 days or longer. The patients are often able to return to work the same day or the day after as long as they are aware that the treatment will be obvious in some locations. Most patients are comfortable in public places after several days with full healing taking up to a month in most cases. Every patient has different skin and different expectations or definitions about down-time. Patients should undergo laser tattoo removal at least 2 weeks prior to a major event such as a wedding or anniversary. A patient may elect to have a more or less aggressive treatment based on their clinical or social situation. Dr. Lowe and our staff can provide you with further information about downtime and recovery during your laser consultation.

### **Is laser tattoo removal right for me?**

In most cases, laser tattoo removal is not something that a patient needs; it is something a patient wants. There is a financial and personal cost for patients who desire tattoo removal. There are a variety of options to treat tattoos. These include dermabrasion, surgery, and laser treatments to name just a few. Tattoo laser removal will provide modest results at a limited cost over time. The treatment regimen is not associated with undue risk in most cases. Most patients undergo more than 12 treatments in our practice which is a testament to its effectiveness. No cosmetic procedure is without risk or cost, but laser tattoo removal is popular because it seems to be the best option in most cases. Patients should carefully weigh the pros and cons of laser tattoo removal before scheduling the procedure. Each patient tattoo is unique, a consultation with a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon or Dermatologist can help you determine what options best suite your situation and pocket book. Laser tattoo removal is often the right thing for the right person. For further information check out our website or other helpful links at [www.drjlowe.com](http://www.drjlowe.com)

### **What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?**

1. The success of laser tattoo removal depends on the most on the tattoo itself.
2. Understand risks (poor results, bruising, crusting, swelling, burning, and scaring).
3. Laser tattoo removal will require 10-15 treatments in most cases.
4. Laser treatment can be adjusted to increase or decrease recovery and results.
5. Stacking treatments in at 1-2 month intervals is usually most effective.
6. The more aggressive the treatment the quicker the tattoo will fade.
7. Most patients tolerate laser tattoo removal with topical numbing cream.
8. Multiple passes performed on the same day improve the results for most patients.
9. Most patients will experience a superficial burn that will require several weeks or longer to fully heal.
10. Physician certification and safety matters when undergoing any laser tattoo treatment.