



Ruby Laser Treatment of Tattoos & Benign Pigmented Lesions

- Patient's Guide -



Lions Laser Skin Centre
The Skin Care Centre
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The Q-switched Ruby Laser

The ruby laser emits brief pulses of intense red light, and has been found to be highly effective for the removal of most tattoos while causing minimal scarring. Ruby laser treatment is also effective for removing the excessive melanin (brown) pigment in benign skin lesions such as age or "liver" spots, "sun" spots, freckles, and certain brown birthmarks (cafe au lait spots). Scarring is seen in less than 5 percent of patients treated.

Before your Treatment

At your first visit, we will discuss the size, type, and color of your tattoo or pigmented lesion, and the probable results of treatment. In general, amateur tattoos (done with India ink) respond very well to treatment, while professional tattoos can be more difficult to treat. Many benign pigmented lesions can be effectively removed with the ruby laser, and we will advise you during your consultation as to how well your particular lesion is likely to respond to treatment. If you agree to the ruby laser treatment, you will be required to sign a consent form, as you are with most medical procedures. The area will be photographed before and after each treatment to show your progress. It is important that you do not expose your tattoo or pigmented lesion to the sun for several months before and throughout your treatment. A suntan will prevent the laser light from reaching the tattoo. It is best if you do not take aspirin or aspirin-containing drugs for 1-2 weeks before treatment.

During your Treatment

If necessary, the hair over the tattoo or pigmented lesion will be shaved before treatment. The laser light is directed at the skin using a flexible hand piece held by the physician. Each laser flash treats an area about the size of a pencil eraser. The laser flashes about once every one to three seconds. Laser flashes feel like an elastic band that is being snapped against your skin. Local anaesthesia is available but is usually not necessary. During treatment, everyone in the room must wear protective eye goggles. A single treatment session may last between 15 to 30 minutes.

After your Treatment

Immediately after treatment, the treated area turns white and swells slightly. Pinpoint bleeding may occur in some treatment sites. The white color fades in 20 minutes. Over the next several days blisters may form, then a scab or a crust may follow. The skin usually returns to normal after 10 to 14 days. You must apply an antibiotic ointment to the treated area twice a day.

Results

You will receive treatments about once every two months. For an amateur tattoo, three to six sessions are required for each treated area, on average. Professional tattoos usually require six or more treatments for each area. Benign pigmented lesions take anywhere from one to six sessions depending on the nature of the lesion. The risks of ruby laser treatment include a change in the color of the treated skin to either lighter or darker than normal. In general, scarring does not occur with the ruby laser, but it does remain a small risk. Some tattoos and pigmented lesions do not respond to treatment. While it is difficult to predict these in advance, professional tattoos with colors such as red and green often do not respond well to this treatment.

Cost

The ruby laser is an expensive medical device to operate and maintain. Neither tattoo or pigmented lesion removal for cosmetic purposes is covered by the British Columbia Medical Services Plan. ***The cost of your treatment is your personal responsibility.*** Fees for treatment are based on the size of the treated area, and payment is made in full prior to each treatment session by cash, Visa, or MasterCard. The fee for the first visit includes a fixed consultation fee, while the cost of each subsequent visit depends on the area to be treated.

Skin Care Following Laser Treatment

1. Keep the site clean. Gentle cleansing twice a day with a mild soap is helpful.
2. Avoid cosmetics on or near the treated area for the first four days after treatment.
3. Strictly avoid sun exposure to the site, by keeping the area covered with clothing or with a dressing (eg., a bandaid). This also applies for at least 3 months after the treatment, since the treated area is very susceptible to sunburn.
4. Use Polysporin ointment (or Bactroban or Bacitracin ointment) twice a day for four days. You may want to cover the area with a loose sterile, non-stick dressing such as Telfa.
5. Do not attempt to remove by force any scabs, scaling or crust which may form since this can lead to scarring. These will fall off naturally in 1 to 2 weeks.
6. If any problems, pain, bleeding, or infection (redness or drainage after 48 hours) occur, please call the Lions Laser Skin Centre at **875-4682 or 875-5151**. For emergencies after office hours and on weekends, please contact your Laser Surgeon (phone number listed in the White Pages).

***The Lions Laser Skin Centre is supported by
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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.

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