

Are there any side effects?

Side effects are rare. When side effects do occur, they are confined to the treatment area. The treating dermatologist can provide complete details of the side effects. Some immediate side effects include redness, swelling, blistering, pain, discoloration at site of treatment that are generally temporary and clear with time. Long term side effects include hyper (excessive) or hypo (decreased) pigmentation, scarring and textural changes.

Are there any alternative treatments?

For tattoo removal, Q switched laser is the best solution. For pigmented lesions, the treatment options depend on the type of lesions and the skin color of the patient. Cosmetic camouflage (concealment) of the birth mark can be a good option to mask the visibility of the lesion.

By
TEAM SIG Lasers & Aesthetics



DR. SHEHNAZ ARSIWALA

M.D., D.D.V. (Gold Medalist)
MMC Reg no. 69134

**Consultant Skin & Hair Specialist,
Cosmetic Dermatologist & Laser Specialist**

M : +91 9821214856 / 9833309598



PRINCE ALY KHAN HOSPITAL

Aga Hall, Nesbit Road, Mazagaon, Mumbai - 10.
Tel.: 2377 7835 / 2372 2500 (Direct Line to Clinic)
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Consulting room: 3rd floor (Executive Health Check up.)
Charni Road Rly. Stn. Mumbai - 4. Tel.: 6757 0111 Ext :330.
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Laser Removal Of Tattoos & Pigmented Lesions





Q Switched lasers for pigmented lesions and tattoo removal

orange, brown colored tattoos respond poorly and require more sessions. Professional tattoos require more sessions than amateur tattoos. A wide range of pigmented lesions can be treated by lasers including sun spots, freckles, and certain brown birth marks such as nevus of Ota. Some pigmented lesions such as Becker's Nevus, Café au lait macules, etc are more difficult to treat and may not respond adequately & may need many sessions to see satisfactory improvement.



After

Before

What treatment options are available for removal of pigmented birth marks and tattoos?

Though various treatment options are available (including surgery, grafting techniques, etc) lasers are generally the best options for effective treatment of these conditions. Of the lasers, the Q switched lasers (QSL) particularly QS Nd:YAG laser is considered the gold standard.

How does the laser work?

Pigmented lesions such as sunspots, freckles, certain birth marks and tattoos can be safely and easily removed with lasers. The laser commonly used for this purpose is the Q-Switched Nd: YAG laser. The laser emits a highly focused beam of light, which passes harmlessly through the outer layers of the skin and is absorbed primarily by the tattoo ink or excess pigment. As the light is absorbed, it is quickly converted to heat. The sudden rise in temperature within the treatment target fractures the ink particles or pigment into tiny particles. These tiny particles are either carried away by the scavenger cells or lymphatic system (the drainage channels) or shed from the skin.

What kind of tattoos and pigmented lesions can be treated?

A tattoo's color, depth, and the chemical composition of the ink all affect how it responds to laser light. Black, dark blue, red tattoos respond readily to treatment. Green, purple,



Are there any precautions before laser treatment?

In general, a patient must avoid a tan as tanned skin carries an increased risk of complications. Strict sun protection is recommended before, during and after laser treatment sessions.

Does it hurt?

The laser light selectively targets the undesired ink or pigment and does not affect the surrounding skin. Most patients tolerate treatment well and report little discomfort. Most people compare the sensation of laser shots to the snap of a rubber band. If treatment is uncomfortable, then topical (surface) anesthesia may be used to minimize discomfort, but is usually not necessary.

What happens after treatment?

Immediately after laser treatment, the treated area may become whitish in color and may swell slightly. There might be some redness & slight burning sensation lasting for a short time. The whiteness subsides in about 30 minutes. The redness and swelling can be minimized by cooling the skin with an ice pack. The tattoo or pigmented lesion may fade over the next few weeks.

How long does it take?

Depending on the size and location of the lesion or tattoo, each session may take 2 minutes to 15 minutes. Some tattoos or pigmented lesions may clear in just one session but others may take multiple sessions spaced over 4-8 weeks between treatments. Number of sessions is not fixed and varies with the lesion and from person to person. Some tattoos can be treated with the technique of repeated exposure on the same day to reduce the total time duration of therapy or if the patient is in a hurry. This is best decided upon by the treating doctor.

Will the birthmark or tattoo completely clear?

It is possible to clear the birth mark or tattoo completely but this may not occur in every case. Most patients respond well with significant clearing of the lesion but occasionally only a lightening may happen. A faint outline (ghost-image) of the tattoo may remain even after multiple sessions. Professional tattoos are more difficult to clear as they have more ink & may be multi-colored.