

## **Brown marks and tattoos**

Both tattoos and pigmented lesions, such as brown birth marks, freckles, sun spots or age spots are caused by pigment sitting near the surface of the skin. Brown marks are caused by natural melanin pigments produced by the skin, whereas tattoos can consist of a wide variety of pigments, or inks.

The Salisbury Laser Clinic has a choice of three Q-switch lasers with which to treat any brown mark or tattoo both safely and effectively.

### **HOW THE TREATMENT WORKS**

Laser light shines through your skin, targeting the pigments in your brown mark or tattoo. The light is delivered in very short pulses that shatter the pigment into smaller parts. Although some of the fragmented pigment comes out of the skin immediately, most is later removed by your body's immune system.

The effectiveness of your treatment depends mostly on both the depth and amount of the pigment. For tattoos, the colour of the pigments is also important.

### **BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT**

- If you have a suntan or an artificial tan, it may be necessary to re-arrange your appointment as this reduces the effectiveness of the treatment.
- If you have a cold sore or other skin infection in the area to be treated, please inform a member of the Laser Clinic staff as treatment must be delayed until the area is completely healed.
- If the area to be treated is on your leg, please wear loose trousers or a skirt. Tight clothes, like jeans, may irritate the area after treatment.

- If you wear make-up on the area to be treated, you will be asked to remove this. Please bring along the lotions that you use to remove it.
- If the area to be treated is close to your eye and you are driving your own car, please bring someone to drive you home. We may use anaesthetic drops in your eye.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN ON THE DAY?**

- When you arrive, you will meet a member of the Laser Clinic staff involved in your treatment. They will explain the treatment to you.
- Photographs may be taken of the area to be treated so that progress can be monitored.
- On your first visit, we may carry out several small test patches at different laser settings. At your next appointment, we will assess which ones are the most effective to achieve the best result for you. A larger area may then be treated at these settings.
- Everyone in the treatment room must wear protective eye wear when the laser is being used. If the area to be treated is very near the eye, special goggles will be used.
- Each pulse of laser light feels like the flick of an elastic band. Most patients do not find the treatment too painful and air cooling is used to reduce any discomfort.

### **AFTER LASER TREATMENT**

- Immediately after treatment, the area will feel hot and a white 'frosty' appearance may be seen for the rest of the day. There may be swollen circles like nettle stings the size of the laser spot.
- A dressing may be applied to the treated area to protect it. This can be left in place for 2 - 3

days and must be kept dry. After the dressing has been removed, treat the area gently. Wash only with water and pat it dry until any damaged skin has completely healed.

- You may have some pain after the treatment. If so, you should take a painkiller such as paracetamol or another one of your choice. Please read and follow the patient information leaflet in the packet.
- There may be some mild scabbing and slight weeping which could last up to a week.
- Some areas can blister following treatment. If this happens, remove blister as soon as possible and treat as a graze. If the blister is extensive, then either contact us or your GP practice nurse
- The risk of scarring is low. To further reduce this risk, please take care not to scratch, knock or rub the treated area.
- Avoid exposure to the sun until the area has healed, and then frequently apply high factor (SPF30 or above) sun cream.
- Do not use any lotions or make-up on the treated areas until they have returned to normal. A little non-scented moisturiser can be used if the area becomes dry.
- Q-Switched Laser treatment aims to decrease the pigment in the treated areas. Although this is often achieved, the underlying skin colour may be made darker or lighter. Any darkening, due to formation of brown skin pigment, usually fades over 6-12 months. If the skin is made paler, this may be permanent.
- The full effect of a single treatment may take up to 6 months to be realised, although we can re-treat soon after the area has healed.
- Multiple treatments may be necessary and some areas may not completely clear.

## STAFF AT THE LASER CLINIC

### Consultant Plastic Surgeons:

Mr Richard Cole. MB, ChB, ChM, FRCS(Plast)

Mr Sathish Jayagopal, MBBS, MRCSEd

Mr Adam Sawyer. BSc, DO-HNS, MSc, LL(M(Law), FEBOPRAS, FRCS(Plast)

Mr Eunan Tiernan. MB, BCh, BAO, BA, FRCSI, FRCS(Plast)

### Scientific Director:

Dr Tom Lister, PhD

### Clinical Scientist:

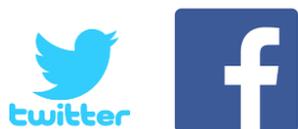
Dr Mark Brewin, PhD

### Laser Specialist Nurse:

Suzy Rainbow

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**Please let us know as soon as possible if you think that you might not be able to make your appointment.**

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If you need this information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Customer Care Team on 0800 374 208 email: [customer-care@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customer-care@salisbury.nhs.uk).

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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## Welcome to The Salisbury Laser Clinic

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## Brown Marks and Tattoos

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information

THE SALISBURY  
**Laser Clinic**

*Treating skin since 1982*

