PICO Laser Tattoo Removal: Aftercare Guide

Updated 3 November 2026 • Tattoo Removal Guide

PICO laser tattoo-removal aftercare is about caring for the treated skin, protecting it from irritation and knowing when to ask for help. Following appropriate instructions can help reduce the risk of complications, but it cannot guarantee that a reaction will not occur. [1][2]

At The Healthy Skin Clinic in Maryport, your individual instructions should reflect the area treated and your skin's response. Use this guide alongside those instructions, not instead of them. It cannot diagnose a skin reaction or confirm that your skin is ready for another treatment.

This guide concerns **body tattoos**. Aftercare for semi-permanent make-up near the eyes or lips may be different and should be discussed separately.

What you may notice after treatment

The treated area may look red or swollen, feel sensitive, or show temporary white "frosting". Blisters or scabs can also occur. Reactions and recovery vary; a general description does not mean that every change is harmless or that the skin will heal by a particular date. [2]

Do not judge recovery only by how the tattoo looks. Contact the clinic if a reaction concerns you, and use the urgent-help guidance below for severe pain, suspected infection or a serious reaction.

Keep the area clean and protect it from friction

Wash your hands before handling a dressing or touching skin that needs care. Clean the area gently as directed and pat it dry rather than rubbing. Avoid scrubbing, scratching or picking. [1][2]

If a dressing is recommended, follow your individual instructions for the type of dressing and when to change it. Protect the area from clothing or equipment that rubs it, without applying an improvised tight covering.

If your instructions recommend a cool compress for comfort, use it as directed. Do not place ice directly on the skin.

Blisters and scabs: do not pop, pick or peel

Do not deliberately burst a blister. Do not peel away blister skin or pick the edges of a scab. Allow scabs to separate naturally. If blisters develop, contact the clinic for advice appropriate to the treated area. [1][2]

If a blister has already burst, wash your hands before handling it, gently clean the area and leave the remaining skin in place. Follow the advice you receive about a suitable protective dressing. Do not try to drain an intact blister yourself. [1]

A blister that is very painful or looks infected needs medical advice, not just a new cream. See **When to seek help** below.

Use only products appropriate to your individual aftercare

Do not assume that a cream, balm, antiseptic or antibiotic is suitable because it has helped someone else. Ask the clinic which product, if any, is appropriate, where it should be applied and how it should be used. Tell the practitioner or pharmacist about relevant allergies and previous reactions to skin products.

Do not start an antibiotic simply because a blister has burst. If infection is suspected, seek medical advice; any medicine should be used according to the advice of the appropriate healthcare professional. [1]

Avoid make-up, perfumed products, scrubs and other products that could irritate the treated area until their use is appropriate under your individual instructions. 2

Protect the skin from sun exposure

Protect the treated area with shade and suitable clothing, and avoid intentional tanning. Do not use sunbeds. Sunscreen is additional protection, not permission to expose recovering skin to strong sunlight. 3

Ask Sarah when sunscreen can be applied to the treated area, particularly if skin is blistered or broken. Do not put sunscreen onto a fresh treatment wound unless you have been advised that it is appropriate.

When suitable for the treated skin, use SPF 50 sunscreen with UVA protection as advised. Apply it according to the product instructions. NHS general sun-safety guidance recommends frequent reapplication, including every two hours during sun exposure and after sweating, towel drying, water exposure or rubbing. This is not a fixed "three times a day" rule. 2 3

Follow the individual sun-protection period discussed with the clinic. Do not stop protecting the area simply because a set number of days or weeks has passed.

Returning to exercise, swimming and your usual routine

Avoid activities that heat, soak, rub or irritate the treated area while it is recovering. Ask the clinic about returning to strenuous exercise, swimming, hot tubs, saunas, steam rooms and hot baths or showers. Discuss fake tan and skin products before restarting them. 2

The right time to resume an activity depends on the condition of the skin and your individual instructions. Do not use a calendar date as permission to swim with open skin, resume an irritating activity or pick a remaining scab.

When to seek help

Clinic contact for aftercare questions: 07533 026018. This is the clinic's publicly listed contact number, not an emergency-service number. 5

Contact the clinic if you have questions about cleaning, dressings, products or a reaction following treatment. For urgent symptoms, do not wait for a routine clinic or website reply.

Seek urgent help through NHS 111 if:

- a blister is very painful;
- the area looks infected, including hot skin, spreading redness or green/yellow pus; or
- a blister is associated with a burn or a suspected allergic reaction. 1

Redness can be harder to see on brown or black skin. Increasing pain or spreading heat also needs attention; do not rely on colour alone. 1 2

Call 999 immediately if you develop sudden swelling of the lips, mouth, tongue or throat, difficulty breathing, or throat tightness/difficulty swallowing. These can be signs of a serious allergic reaction. 4

Planning the next treatment

There is no universal healing deadline or automatic date for the next appointment. Sarah may discuss your recovery, any reaction, the skin's condition and the applicable treatment protocol before a further treatment is considered.

An area that appears settled does not, by itself, establish readiness for another laser session. Individual suitability and review remain part of the treatment plan. Do not shorten an agreed interval in an attempt to accelerate fading.

For related planning information, read about tattoo removal, the consultation and patch test, and planning a multi-session course.

Sources

- 1. NHS: caring for blisters and when to seek urgent help
- 2. Leeds Teaching Hospitals: laser-treatment reactions, aftercare and individual review
- 3. NHS: shade, clothing, sunscreen protection and reapplication
- 4. NHS: signs of a serious allergic reaction and when to call 999
- 5. Clinic contact number displayed on the tattoo-removal website