



# NEW BEAUTY®

## With Lower-Back Tattoos Falling Out of Vogue, Women Are Getting Them Removed

January 26, 2017 | By Liz Ritter



Like a lot of women, Jody Baratz got a tattoo when she was younger.

“It seemed like a good idea at the time, but it's way too big and it's not really what I wanted.”

Now Baratz wants it gone, but she has some reservations regarding what exactly that's going to involve. “I know you can laser it off, but I am afraid of the pain [it's located on her foot]. Also, I've heard that blue ink is one of the hardest colors to remove and that's pretty much the main color. Pain and cost are holding me back.”

The stats don't lie: Numbers report that out of all people in the U.S. that undergo tattoo removal, a whopping 70 percent are women. What's more, the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery said the procedure saw significant increases in 2015, and was up by 37 percent.

Willowbrook, IL, dermatologist Jessie Cheung, MD, says she's absolutely been seeing a “subset of women coming in to remove their tattoos,” but she's treating one area a lot more than the rest: “They come in for the tattoos on their lower back—the ‘tramp-stamp,’” she says. “As lasers are becoming more demystified and the treatments are more efficient, women are realizing that they don't need to live with tattoos that are from a previous lifetime.”



She also says Baratz's fear of the pain associated with removal is almost "always a concern." "Injected anesthetics may change how the laser interacts with the tissue, so most providers won't numb a tattoo with injectable Lidocaine. The good news is that there are very strong topical numbing creams on the market now that can be applied to the tattoo prior to treatment, so you can really have a comfortable experience."

Cheryl Halper, 54, says when she got her tattoo removed, the pain was minimal. "It definitely hurt way less than getting the actual tattoo. I'd describe it as a rubber band snapping against your skin over and over at a rapid pace. It even sounds that way."

While Halper says she has other tattoos that she doesn't regret, this particular one was wrong for her from the start.

"From the minute I got it—a wrist tattoo of my Zodiac sign—I knew it was too big and I was right. I lived with it for a few years but when my daughter was getting married, I knew that it was something I needed to get rid of."

Before the treatment, Halper describes herself as someone who was aware of lasers that removed tattoos but was not familiar with the process or the cost.

Her biggest surprise: "After the second session I was actually disappointed because I didn't see any difference—then they explained that when a tattoo is removed it takes time to see a difference [she ended up needing four treatments total]. Also, after care is very important just like when you get the actual tattoo, you want your new, non-inked skin to heal properly."

That's the main thing Troy, MI, plastic surgeon **Anthony Youn**, MD, says most people don't understand about laser tattoo removal—it's not going to give immediate results. "It works by the laser destroying the pigment in the tattoo, then allowing the body to dispose of the destroyed pigment using natural means," he adds. "Each color of a tattoo is destroyed using a different wavelength in the laser, and until recently it could sometimes necessitate multiple lasers to clear a complex tattoo, along with 10 or more treatments sometimes. The newest lasers, the picosecond lasers, work much faster and more effectively than the older lasers. These can clear tattoos more effectively and with less treatments—sometimes half or less of the treatments—than the older, nanosecond lasers."

So is Halper glad she got her tattoo removed? "Absolutely! It was wrong from the start and even though it cost me four times as much to remove the tattoo as it did to get it in the first place, I am happy that there was that option," she says.

<https://www.newbeauty.com/hottopic/blogpost/10453-laser-tattoo-removal/>