

Tattoos

So you are thinking about a tattoo?

I would like to give you some useful questions to ask your tattooist and guidelines to help you make a good decision.

Why you are getting a tattoo?

People who get tattoos on an impulse, dare, to rebel, please someone else or are under the influence of alcohol or drugs are the ones who are *rarely* happy down the road. A tattoo is permanent. Removal can leave scarring and discoloration. Your decision to get a tattoo is personal – examine your motives carefully. Will you be happy with your tattoo in 10 years?

What are the risks of getting a tattoo?

Most people are well educated about the possibility of getting diseases like Hepatitis B or C and HIV from tattoos. I was surprised to find out that you could also get tetanus or tuberculosis. You can develop granulomas (permanent bumps) or keloids (excessive scarring) from tattoos. There is also a risk of getting a skin infection from or after a tattoo. There have been rare cases reported of skin infections spreading to the lungs or blood from bacterial infections.

Some people develop allergies to the ink – even years after the tattoo. Red ink causes the most frequent reactions – allergic and granulomas. BTW – yellow and green ink are the most difficult to remove. Red, orange and purple are the easiest. You may have a burning from an MRI at the site of a tattoo (especially black or dark brown ink). You cannot donate blood for 12 months after a tattoo or piercing.

Could a tattoo affect you socially?

How will your family, friends or partner feel about your tattoo? What if you have “Jack” tramp-stamped on your behind and next year it’s Xavier who’s looking at your behind? Is tattooing acceptable to your culture or religion? In a perfect world there would be no judgments. But ask yourself if a tattoo could adversely affect your employment or professional futures.

If you have made the decision there are ways that you can protect yourself from harm or dissatisfaction with your tattoo.

1. Are you immunized against Hepatitis B and tetanus? There are no vaccines for Hepatitis C or tuberculosis.
2. If you have any health problems like: bleeding disorder, skin cancer, diabetes or heart murmur, be sure to check with your health care provider before being tattooed.
3. Check to make sure the studio is licensed. *Do not* allow an unlicensed person or friend give you a tattoo. Are the shop, furnishings and tattooist clean and orderly?
4. Is the studio a member of the Alliance of Professional Tattooists or National Tattoo Association?
5. Discuss the design with your tattooist. Listen to their artistic input – does it suit you or not? They have seen a lot more tattoos than you have.

6. Ask to see examples of the artists work. Do you know others who have used this artist. How many years experience does the artist have?
7. Ask the artist or studio how they sterilize equipment. If they have an autoclave, check to make sure it is working properly (safepiercing.org has detailed information)
8. Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen (or any anti-inflammatories) or alcohol before tattooing. These things thin your blood and can increase bleeding.
9. If you have any metal allergies, ask the tattooist if they are present in the inks to be used.
10. Discuss after care of your tattoo with the artist beforehand.
11. The tattooist should open new needle packages in front of you, wash their hands, put on new gloves and use new ink from a disposable container. If the area to be tattooed needs to be shaved, make sure it is a new disposable razor.

Web-sites:

www.safepiercing.org

www.mayoclinic.com/health/tattoos-piercing

www.safe-tattoos.com

www.nationaltattooassociation.com

How can the SHPS help you?

Hepatitis B (\$30 each/\$90 or series) and tetanus (\$40) vaccinations are available at the Student Health and Psychological Services office. If you have had a tattoo or piercing and have concerns please come in for free advice!