

Think Before You Ink: Choosing a Tattoo Studio

Tattooing involves breaking the skin. When this protective barrier is broken, you are more susceptible to a variety of health risks.

Specific health risks commonly associated with tattooing include:

➤ **Diseases / Infections**

- Diseases such as Hepatitis B & C and HIV can be spread through contaminated blood.
- Bacterial infections such as Streptococcus and Staphylococcus can be transmitted.
- Skin infections/conditions that cause redness, swelling and pus like drainage from the affected areas can occur.

➤ **Allergic reactions**

- Allergies to inks in both permanent and temporary tattoos have been reported.

➤ **Scarring**

- Scar tissue may form when getting or removing a tattoo.

➤ **Granulomas**

- Small knots or bumps may form around anything the body thinks is foreign, such as ink.



WHERE DO THE POTENTIAL HEALTH RISKS COME FROM?

Health risks can occur from:

- Contaminated equipment
- Contaminated/toxic inks and/or pigments
- An unclean studio and/or
- Unsafe procedures

HOW CAN I DECREASE POTENTIAL HEALTH RISKS WHEN GETTING A TATTOO?

- Professional tattoo artists should be willing to discuss their hygiene and tattooing procedures.
- Use the following checklist(s) to make an informed decision.

Checklist for choosing a Tattoo Studio

What you need to ask your tattoo artist:

- Where did you get your training to become a tattoo artist?
 - Remember tattooing is not a regulated profession in BC. That means there are no licensing requirements for tattoo artists. It is the responsibility of individual tattoo artists to ensure that they learn proper and safe tattooing procedures.*
- Is your tattoo studio regularly inspected by the health department?
 - The studio is subject to regular inspections by the health department. This helps ensure that tattoo artists follow health department requirements to protect your health.*
 - To view the latest Fraser Health inspection reports, visit www.healthspace.ca/fha*
- How do you prepare the skin prior to tattooing?
 - The skin should be prepared with an appropriate skin antiseptic such as 70% isopropyl alcohol.*
- How are all work areas disinfected after each client?
 - Disinfectant such as a bleach/water solution should be used to help destroy harmful germs.*
- Do you provide verbal and written instructions for aftercare of how to take care of a tattoo?

For any questions or concerns contact your local Environmental Health Services department.

Website: www.healthspace.ca/fha
www.fraserhealth.ca

Things to look for at the tattoo studio:

- Does the tattoo studio appear to be clean, well organized and have good lighting?
 - Ask yourself:*
 - Do you feel comfortable with the cleanliness of the studio?*
 - Is the studio cluttered with items that look like they don't belong?*
 - Do you think there is enough light for the tattoo artist to see clearly?*
- Does the studio have proper sinks for handwashing and cleaning?
 - Hot and cold running water should be available*
 - Soap and paper towels should be available*
 - Different sinks should be used for handwashing and cleaning.*
- Does the tattoo artist practice good hygiene.
 - Must wash hands with liquid soap and water:*
 - before and after tattooing*
 - after handling tattooing equipment*
 - before putting on and after removing gloves*
 - Must not work when sick, under the influence of alcohol, drugs or smoking when working on your tattoo*
 - Should be neat and clean in appearance*
- Are tattoo needles prepackaged and single use or reused?
 - If needles are single use, check to see if packages are opened in front of you. If needles are reused they must be sterilized between clients.*
 - Note: Sterilization equipment (such as an autoclave or dry heat sterilizer) is used to kill potential disease causing organisms that may be found on instruments.*
- Are razors, needles and gloves for the tattoo application discarded after use?
- Are inks and creams for tattoo application dispensed in disposable containers?
 - Clean single use applicators must be used to dispense all creams and lotions. Double dipping is not allowed.*
- Are items that can not be easily disinfected (i.e. tattoo machine, clip cord, spray bottles, etc.) covered with single use plastic covers?
 - Plastic covers must be changed after every client.*