

Think Before You Ink

Choosing a Tattoo Studio

Tattooing involves breaking the skin. When the skin is broken, there is a greater chance of a person having an unwanted illness or side effect. We call these health risks.

Health risks common to tattooing

Diseases and Infections

- Tattooing can pass on diseases such as Hepatitis B and C, and HIV through contaminated blood.
- Tattooing can pass on bacterial infections such as Streptococcus and Staphylococcus.
- Any type of skin infection or skin condition from the tattoo could cause redness, swelling, and pus-like fluid from the infected area.

Allergic reactions

- Some people have had an allergic reaction to the inks in both permanent and temporary tattoos.

Scarring

- You might get scar tissue when getting or removing a tattoo.

Granulomas

- The human body sometimes form small knots or bumps around anything that is foreign such as ink.



Where do these health risks come from?

Health risks can come from any of these:

- contaminated equipment
- contaminated or toxic inks and pigments
- an unclean studio
- doing the tattoo in an unsafe way

How can I lower my chances of having one of these health risks a tattoo?

Professional tattoo artists should be willing to tell you about how they clean their equipment, how they keep their customers safe, and what they do to prevent unwanted health problems from tattooing.

To help you choose a tattoo artist and studio, use the checklist on the next page.

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 each tattoo artists to make sure they learn the correct way to do tattoos safely.
- Does the health department regularly inspect your tattoo studio?
The health department inspects tattoo studios regularly. Inspections help make sure tattoo artists are following what the health department requires to protect client's health. To view our latest health inspection reports, go online to healthspace.ca/fha.
- How do you prepare the skin?
The skin should be cleaned with a skin antiseptic such as 70% isopropyl alcohol.
- How are all work areas disinfected after each client?
To help destroy harmful germs, the tattoo artist should disinfect the area with a cleaning solution such as a bleach and water.
- Do you explain to clients how to care of the tattoo when first done?
- Do you give clients instructions in writing on how to care for the skin after the tattoo?



For questions or concerns, contact your local Health Protection office.

To find an office near you, do one of these things:

- Go to fraserhealth.ca/healthprotection.
- Scan this QR Code.



Things to look for at the tattoo studio:

- Does the tattoo studio look clean and well organized? Does it have good lighting?
Ask yourself these questions:
- Do I feel comfortable with the cleanliness of the studio?
 - Is the studio cluttered with items that look like they don't belong there?
 - Is there 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 do things to prevent the spread of germs?
The tattoo artist must wash their hands with liquid soap and water at these times:
- before and after tattooing
 - after handling tattooing equipment
 - before putting on and after removing gloves
- The tattoo artist must not work when sick.
While working on your tattoo, the tattoo artist must not smoke or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
The tattoo artist should look neat and clean.
- Are tattoo needles in single-use packages or are they reused?
Tattoo needles should be single use and the tattoo artist should open the package in front of you. If the tattoo artist reuses needle bars or grips, they must be sterilized between clients.
Note: The studio should use sterilization equipment such as an autoclave or dry heat sterilizer to kill germs that could be on instruments and needles.
- Are razors, needles, and gloves thrown away after they are used for the tattoo?
- Are disposable containers and applicators used for inks and creams?
The tattoo artist must use disposable containers for inks and clean single use applicators for all creams and lotions.
Double dipping is not allowed.
- Are items that cannot be easily disinfected covered with single-use plastic covers such as the tattoo machine, clip cord, and spray bottles?
The tattoo artist must change plastic covers after every client.