

PIERCING AND TATTOO'S

Why do people get a *tattoo* or *body piercing*?

Tattoos, body piercing and other *skin adornments* have increased in popularity in recent years. These practices date back almost 5,300 years and began as cultural rituals that were perceived as a sign of beauty and class distinction. In modern society, *tattoos* and *piercing* have become cosmetic body enhancement and are often seen as a medium for self-expression, individuality, and enhancement of personal pleasure. As these forms of art have gained popularity there have been a growing need to explore the health concerns that are directly related to breaking of the dermis (skin), which is part of the process in *tattooing* and *piercing*, and other *skin adornments*.

Health Issues to consider prior to *piercing* or *tattoos*:

1. Infection
2. Allergic responses to dye or metal
3. Scarring and keloid formation
4. Interference with medical tests like MRIs
5. Permanency

Protecting Yourself:

Make an informed decision! Find a licensed shop with an experienced person to do your *tattoo* or *piercing*. Do not be afraid to ask about their infection control practices, most shops are proud of their sterilization equipment and techniques and will gladly show you. If a shop is unwilling to show you such equipment think twice about using their services. ***Ask these simple questions:***

1. Are your tattoo pigments (colorings) dispensed from single needle use containers (reduces the chance of infection)?
2. Are disposable sterile needles used for each tattoo?
3. Is all your equipment sterilized after each use? A shop will need an autoclave or dry heat sterilizer.
4. Does the professional wear disposable gloves for each encounter and reglove when they arrive/leave?

Other Health Consideration:

1. An individual with a documented health condition such as: heart disease, diabetes, hemophilia, auto-immune disorder or any other condition which might negatively influence the healing process.
2. Skin or tissue abnormality
3. Pierce irregular or surgically altered anatomy
4. Pregnancy

If you decide to continue your quest for a *tattoo* or *piercing*:

- Talk to friends about where they might have gotten their tattoo or piercing
- Draw a picture of the tattoo or piercing you wish to have and tape it to your skin to see what it looks like on.
- Visit a few shops before you decide
- Check out their work area – Is it clean and sanitary?
- Are they licensed or belong to the association?

Where can I go for further information?

- UTSA Student Health Service either 1604 campus or Downtown
- Association of Professional Piercers - www.safepiercing.org
- Health A to Z – www.healthatoz.com
- American Academy of Dermatology - www.aadassociation.org/telemedicine.html



Tattoo Pre-removal



10 months post laser removal