

## Is it right for me?

Altering your body is a very personal decision. Before you go any further, you need to be sure it's right for you.

### To help make your decision ask yourself the following:

- Am I making this choice myself without pressure from my friends?
- Have I asked someone who has had body art for a long time (five, 10, 15 years) if they still like it? Remember, what's popular today may not be tomorrow.
- Do I have any personal health issues (metal allergies, unvaccinated against hepatitis B) that may affect my choice?
- If my tattoo/piercing is in an obvious spot and cannot be hidden by clothing, will it affect future job opportunities?
- Can I make a personal statement in some other way?
- Can I commit the time to care for my new tattoo/piercing (daily, up to six months)? Should I try alternatives like temporary tattoos or henna for awhile to help me decide?

### You need to consider body art lifelong.

If you have any doubts, wait and gather more information to help you make an informed choice. Laser treatments can remove tattoos, but they are very expensive. Costs range from \$150-\$500 per treatment and five to six treatments may be needed. Permanent discoloration of your skin may happen even after removal.

Tattoos take up to six weeks to heal, earlobe piercing six to eight weeks, eyebrow six to eight weeks, ear cartilage and naval four months to one year, tongue four weeks, lip two to three months, nostrils two to four months, nipple three to six months.

If your tattoo/piercing becomes more red or swollen than before, feels hot to the touch or oozes pus, you may have an infection.

Contact your doctor as soon as possible!

For more information contact a member of the Communicable Disease Team.

Source: Central West Personal Setting Services Network

Updated March 2013



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POPULATION HEALTH TEAM

# Tattooing and Body Piercing



## Considering body art?

You get what you pay for!

### Protect Your Health – Find a Good Artist

A well-trained professional artist does the safest work.

Safe work is done in a properly equipped professional studio. Friends and people operating out of their homes are not likely to be equipped or experienced enough to do safe, quality work.

### Risks

The skin is the body's first line of defence against infections. Any time the skin is broken, there are health risks.

**HIV and hepatitis (B and C)** are examples of serious infections you can get from unclean equipment.

**Hepatitis B vaccination is strongly recommended before getting a tattoo/body piercing.**

### Remember

Tattooing/body piercing is not a regulated profession in Ontario. This means that standards and licensing do not exist to ensure these individuals are knowledgeable and competent in their profession. They have to take it upon themselves to learn proper and safe procedures.

Insist on seeing the needle removed from the sterile packaging before it is used on you. All other instruments must be sterile, pre-packed and opened in front of you.

Experienced tattoo/body piercing artists will be happy to show you what steps they've taken to lower the risk of spreading disease to you and to themselves and will be willing to answer all your questions.

## Checklist for choosing a Studio

### Here's what to look for:

- Autoclave sterilizer – It's very important that artists sterilize all instruments that contact blood or body fluids.
- A handwashing sink, cleaners and surface disinfectants, and skin antiseptics must be available and used with each tattooing/body piercing procedure.
- Records should show the autoclave is being tested monthly.
- New, sterile needles are used each time and then thrown out in a "sharps" container.
- Only sterile, individually pre-packed instruments are used for each tattooing/body piercing procedure, and opened in front of you.
- Disposable items such as razors, ink caps, swabs, gloves are being used and then tossed.
- Only fresh ink is used for tattooing and poured into disposable caps in front of you.
- The artist always wears disposable gloves and changes them after touching anything that might not be sterile.
- Only clean (if possible, sterile) dressings can cover the new tattooed/pierced area.

For information on studio inspection call the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit.



## Checklist for choosing an artist

### Here's what to look for:

- The artist is willing to show you all areas of the studio and can confidently answer all your questions, including those about sterilization methods.
- The artist has a portfolio of his/her work available for you to see.
- The artist is not under the influence of alcohol or drugs while working on you. You shouldn't be either. Some drugs can cause you to bleed more and interfere with healing as well as interfering with your good judgment.
- The artist discusses aftercare instructions with you. Lots of things can damage your new tattoo/piercing such as sunlight, swimming and too much handling. (Your new body modification is technically an open wound, so you have to treat it properly or you risk getting an infection, which can wreck your new body art.)



Photo credit: Manuel defreitas, Oxford County Board of Health