

Tattoos & Body Piercings

What You Should Know!

As you may have noticed, tattoos and body piercings are pretty common, especially among young people. Tattoos and piercings are not for everyone, and are a big, permanent commitment, especially tattoos. It's very important that you are selective in choosing a facility if you do decide to get a tattoo or piercing. When facilities cut corners and fail to use sterile supplies, serious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis may be transmitted. In order to protect yourself, you must look for certain features in a tattoo/piercing facility before getting anything done.

Protect Yourself!

- ★ Make sure that employees thoroughly wash their hands with antibacterial soap immediately before and after each tattoo application/piercing
- ★ Ensure that gloves are worn during the tattooing/piercing procedure
- ★ The studio must have a working, FDA-regulated autoclave for sterilizing all reusable equipment
- ★ It is imperative that sterile disposable needles are used
- ★ For tattooing, single service materials and equipment must be individually packaged, dated and sealed, and autoclave sterilized, and must be opened and set up in front of you with gloved hands
- ★ For piercings, the forceps, needle, jewelry, and any other metal equipment should also be sterile and removed from an autoclave bag with gloved hands
- ★ Under no circumstances should you be pierced anywhere on your body with a piercing gun, squeeze piercer, or any other object other than a clean, sterile needle approved for body piercing

Getting a body piercing or tattoo is a big responsibility, and in order to get the results you want and avoid getting something you don't want (like an infection), you need to take proper care of it.

Piercing After-Care

- ★ Always wash your hands before and after touching your piercing, and if you aren't cleaning it, you shouldn't be touching it
- ★ Use a cotton ball or Q-tip with a liquid antibacterial solution to clean your piercing twice a day
- ★ Dry the whole area with a clean paper towel
- ★ You don't need to turn the jewelry unless it seems like it's beginning to "stick" to you skin
- ★ Avoid public hot tubs and swimming pools, lakes, and the ocean until your piercing is healed, and always clean your piercing after any swimming
- ★ If at any point during your healing process you feel extreme pain or numbness, seek medical advice

Tattoo After-Care

- ★ A tattoo should initially heal within 5 to 10 days, but complete healing will take as long as 45 days
- ★ Remove the bandage that the tattoo artist applied within 1 to 2 hours
- ★ For the first 3 to 4 hours, you will have to wash the tattoo with soap, warm water, and a soft cloth (dabbing not wiping) every 15 to 20 minutes
- ★ After the first day, the tattoo must be cleaned twice a day, preferably using your (clean!) hand instead of a cloth, as cloth can be too abrasive
- ★ Every time you clean and dry your tattoo, you will need to apply a topical antibiotic ointment such as bacitracin (twice a day for 2 weeks)
- ★ Do not pick or scratch at your tattoo, and avoid hot tubs, swimming pools, lakes, ocean water, sun, and long showers (>10 minutes) for 2 weeks