

SKIN PENETRATION

What is body art?

Tattoos, body piercing, branding, cutting and scarification are all types of body art. The most popular forms of body art in Western Australia are tattoos and body piercing.

What are Tattoos?

Tattoos are permanent designs on the skin. They are made with coloured inks put under the skin with a hand held tattooing machine (like below).

The tattoo needle inserts ink into the skin's dermal layer.

Tattoos are created by injecting ink into the skin; this injection is done by a needle attached to a hand-held tool.

The tool moves the needle up and down at a rate of several hundred vibrations per minute and penetrates the skin by about one millimetre.

What you see when you look at a tattoo is the ink that's left in the skin after the tattooing. The ink is not in the epidermis, which is the layer of skin that we see and the skin that gets replaced constantly, but instead intermingles with cells in the dermis and shows through the epidermis.

What is body piercing?

Body piercings are holes in the skin made so that jewellery can be worn. The holes are made with a sharp instrument like a needle.

Who regulates tattooists and body piercers? and how old should I be?

Tattooing and body piercing are not nationally regulated; the responsibility lies with each of the States and Territories

Regulation can either be covered by the criminal code or by health acts that regulate providers in regard to the control of infectious diseases.

Western Australian legislation stipulates that a minimum age for consenting to tattooing is 18 years of age or with parental consent based on cultural or religious beliefs.

The recognised age of consent for body piercing is 16 years of age.

Choosing a Tattooist

A reputable and responsible tattooist should operate from a hygienic and clean studio. The tattooist should have photographs of previous work undertaken and freely answer questions about the procedure and infection control.

A reputable tattooist will not tattoo you on the spot, rather they will talk to you about your ideas, design etc and send you away to think long and hard about the procedure, they will then arrange an appointment time with you to perform the body art at a later date.

Look for certificates of membership to tattoo organisations such as the PTAA, The Professional Tattooing Association of Australia.

Choosing a piercer

A responsible piercer should operate from a clean and hygienic studio. The piercer should freely answer questions about their experience, infection control and procedures in their studio.

The piercer should ask you about any personal health matters which could indicate that you should not be pierced such as skin infections, heart valve disease and chemotherapy treatment. The piercer should outline potential risks, complications and healing times.

A reputable and responsible piercer should wash their hands and put on disposable gloves before starting your procedure, open sterilised, packaged needles, instruments and jewellery in front of you. The piercer should clean and disinfect the piercing site and encourage you to return so the healing process can be checked.

Is the piercer a member of the APP, The Association of Professional Piercers and do they provide you written after care guidelines?

Questions you are entitled to (and should) ask your piercer?

Do you have documentary proof of relevant Health Department registrations?

Are single use needles used for all piercings?

Is all re-usable equipment autoclaved before use?

When did you last have an inspection by an Environmental Health Officer?

What should a piercing or tattoo studio be like?

First and foremost the establishment should be clean and well lit, the piercer or tattooist should practice aseptic technique; which includes appropriate sterilisation of instruments and / or jewellery, disinfection of surfaces and avoiding cross-contamination. Every instrument that comes into contact with your body or with the jewellery should come from sealed sterilisation packets with sterilisation indicators.

The needle and jewellery should remain in sterilisation packets until they are used.

Universal precautions should be undertaken at all times, these are the protocol for infection control that treats all human blood and bodily fluids as if known to be infectious for HIV, HBV and other blood borne pathogens.

What can go wrong with my piercing or tattoo?

After care of tattoos and body piercing's is paramount and any concerns should be addressed to the body artist or your GP. A reputable artist will ensure that you have written literature detailing after-care and also have products available to assist in the healing process.

Some problems that can occur with body art are allergic reactions, hole's stretching, hepatitis C or B, fungal infections and HIV.

**** DISCLAIMER ****

This information sheet is a guide only. Verification with original Local Laws, Acts, Planning Schemes, and other relevant documents is recommended for detailed references. The City of Albany accepts no responsibility for errors or omissions.

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