

After getting body art

Ask the artist for a list of instructions on how to care for the tattoo or piercing. It is important to follow those instructions so the tattoo or piercing doesn't become infected or ruined by poor care.

Tips for taking care of a new tattoo or piercing

- Don't pick at any scabs that form on the tattoo or piercing.
- If the tattooing or piercing site becomes infected, it must be treated by a doctor.
- Avoid prolonged exposure to the sun for about a month.
- Avoid swimming pools and hot tubs for at least a week.

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The Risks

Hepatitis B: This disease is spread by a virus that can live in semen, vaginal fluids and saliva as well as in a person's blood. Hep B can cause jaundice, which turns a person's eyes and skin yellow. It can also leave an infected person feeling tired or even cause liver cancer.

There is an immunization for Hepatitis B, and there are treatments for infected people.

Hepatitis C: This disease is spread by a virus that lives in an infected person's blood. Someone with Hep C can suffer from cirrhosis (sir-OH-sis), which is a scarring of the liver that makes it hard to clean toxins out of the blood. Some people with Hep C also develop liver cancer. A quarter of a million people in Canada have Hepatitis C, but only about 30% of them know they are infected.

There is no immunization for Hepatitis C, but there are treatments for infected people.

HIV: The Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV) causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). People infected with HIV lose their ability to fight off infections and sicknesses. This virus can spread when infected blood enters an uninfected person's bloodstream, which often happens when people share needles for injecting drugs. HIV can also be transmitted during sex by an infected person's semen or vaginal fluids.

There is no cure or immunization for HIV, but there are medications that can help an infected person live longer.

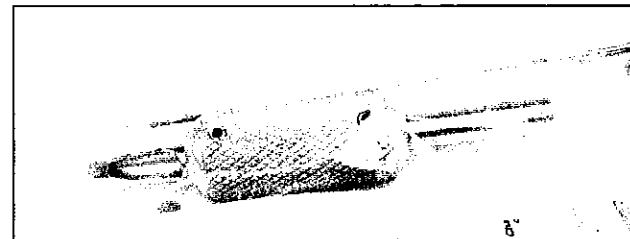
Heads Up

Since tattoo and piercing needles puncture the skin, they can pick up viruses from an infected person. If a dirty needle is re-used, it can spread Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV or other infections. For that reason, tattoos or piercings done with poorly cleaned instruments can be dangerous! It is best to get your body art done by a professional body artist who knows how to take care of your health.

Soap and water, sprays or pressure cookers won't sterilize tattoo and piercing instruments. Neither will soaking them in chemicals. Instruments should be cleaned and sterilized in an autoclave, which uses heat and pressure to kill germs. If you have doubts about a studio's cleaning practices, it is OK if you ask to see their autoclave.

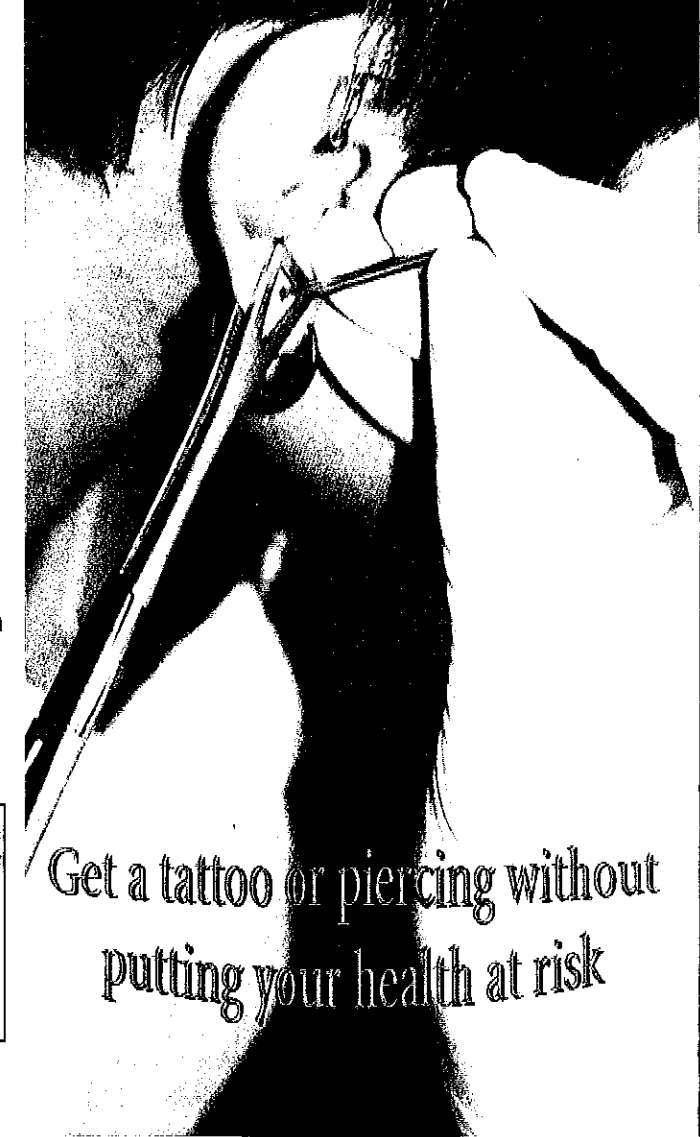
Tattoo and piercing studios should be clean, and should never have pets, smoking, alcohol or drugs in them. If an artist can't even keep his or her studio clean, then what kind of body art can you expect from that person? If in doubt, just walk out.

NEVER get body art while you're drunk or high - you may regret it later on!



Instruments, such as this tattoo needle grip, should be sterilized and sealed after each use.

Safer Body Art



Get a tattoo or piercing without
putting your health at risk