

# PIERCING AND TATTOO SERVICES

## Information for the general public

Porcupine Health Unit, Public Health Inspection Services, Infection Control

NOTE: This information is provided solely for your convenience and to increase awareness about the services you receive. This information is not intended to be legal or medical advice. If you have medical questions arising from care you have received, speak with your doctor. If you have legal concerns about any piercing or tattoo service, consult a lawyer.

Ontario consumers have the right to expect clean, safe services when having body piercing or tattoos. Anytime the skin is pierced or tattooed, bacteria and viruses can easily enter the body. You can get HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C and many other serious infections. You do not have to see blood or body fluids on needles, equipment or surfaces for an infection to occur. Make sure the business has made both hygiene and appropriate sterilization or disinfection of equipment high priorities.

### What to look for and ask:

- Make sure you go to a business that has been inspected by Public Health staff. Ask to see the most recent inspection report or call your local public health unit for more information.
- The business should be clean and well lit.
- The business must have a sink with liquid soap and paper towels to wash and dry hands.
- The worker must wash their hands before they touch you and must use a new pair of disposable gloves for each piercing or tattoo.
- Home piercing and tattoos are not recommended because they are not likely to be inspected by Public Health staff. You shouldn't visit "underground" studios or get home piercings by your friends either.
- Ask how the body artist cleans and sterilizes the tattoo and piercing equipment. If he/she hesitates or does not answer you, you may want to take your business somewhere else.
- Prior to being pierced with a needle, your skin must first be cleaned to kill any germs that may be on your skin.
- Watch the worker remove the sterile needles from the package. The sterile needles should be used immediately after being removed from the package. They should not be placed on any surface before use.
- For tattooing, watch when the needle bar, needles, tube and grip are removed from packaging.
- Needles and needle bars must be pre-packaged and sterile and should only be used once then thrown out in a special container.
- The sterile needles should be used immediately after being removed from the package. They should not be placed on any surface before use.
- A tattoo or body piercing studio must have a working sterilizer to sterilize equipment. Ask to see the most recent spore test result

for the sterilizer. A passing spore test will indicate that the machine is working properly to destroy harmful germs.

- Ultraviolet sterilizers are not approved for sterilization of equipment.
- You have the right to ask the worker to explain how they clean and disinfect their equipment before the service begins.
- If you have any doubts, LEAVE. Your body and health may be at risk..
- If you have any concerns, contact your local public health unit.

#### **Choosing a worker:**

- The worker should not be smoking, drinking or taking drugs while working on you.

#### **Safe healing:**

- Wash your hands before touching the tattoo or piercing.
- Make sure that your new tattoo is covered with a clean bandage.
- You should get verbal and written instructions on how to prevent the tattoo or piercing from getting infected.
- Many infections are caused by poor care of the tattoo by the client. It is important to follow the instructions given to you by the worker.

- See a doctor if your tattoo or piercing is red, sore, swollen, tender or there is pus coming from it. You may have an infection.

**For more information,  
contact your local  
health inspector  
or call 1-800-461-1818.  
[www.porcupinehu.on.ca](http://www.porcupinehu.on.ca)**

