



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Tattoos

What is a tattoo?

By Indiana Law, a tattoo is:

1. Any indelible design, letter, scroll, figure, symbol, or other mark placed with the aid of needles or other instruments; or
2. Any design, letter, scroll, figure, symbol done by scarring on or under the skin

Facial tattooing, i.e. permanent make-up or body art, is an invasive procedure and considered a tattoo. Examples of facial tattooing include eyebrow tattoo, lip liner, eyeliner, or blush that looks like make-up.

How is a tattoo done?

Permanent tattoos are made by using a handheld electric device that uses a tube and needle system. On one end is a sterilized needle, which is attached to tubes that contain ink. When the machine is turned on, the needle moves in and out of the skin, driving the ink into the deeper layers of skin. The process, which may last several hours for a large tattoo, can cause a small amount of bleeding.

What laws govern tattooing in Indiana?

In 1997, Indiana Code 16-19-3-4.1 required the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) to adopt rules to regulate the sanitary operation of tattoo parlors. The rule, 410 IAC 1-5, became law on June 12, 1998, and was readopted July 15, 2010. The following are some requirements of the tattoo rule:

- All tattoo artists must receive yearly training concerning how diseases are spread by contact with blood (i.e. bloodborne pathogen training).
- To receive a tattoo, anyone under 18 years of age must be accompanied by, and have written permission from, a parent or legal guardian.
- Gloves or other appropriate personal protection must be worn by the artist when performing tattooing procedures and when handling blood.
- All needles must be sterile and designed for single use.
- Reusable equipment must be sterilized before being used.

- Infectious waste must be handled properly according to Indiana law (IC 16-41-16, <https://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2014/ic/titles/016>).

What is NOT included in the rule?

The rule does NOT:

- Require a tattooist to register with the **ISDH**.
- Require the **ISDH** to perform routine inspections of tattoo parlors.
- Require tattooists to receive training or certification on the tattooing process.

Tattooists should **contact their local county health department** for local laws and regulations that pertain to the registration, licensing and inspection of tattoo parlors in their county.

What should you look for when selecting a tattoo parlor?

- The tattooist and parlor should be neat and clean in appearance
- Patron (client) rights materials must be displayed
- There should be hand-washing facilities with running water available for the tattooist to use
- The staff should be willing and able to answer your questions and provide information about the proper care of your tattoo after it has been applied
- Tattooists should not work when sick
- Tattooists must wear disposable gloves when tattooing
- All equipment should be single use. Each needle and tube set should be individually packaged, dated, sealed, sterilized, and opened immediately prior to the application of your tattoo
- A new ink supply should be poured into a disposable container
- Any razors, needles, ink, plastic trays or containers, gloves, or ointments used in your tattoo application should be discarded after use
- Appropriate disinfectants should be used to clean the work area after tattoo application

What are the risks of getting a tattoo?

While a tattoo may only take a few minutes to acquire, it is permanent. You should understand the risks and research the process before getting a tattoo. If you are prone to getting infections, check with your healthcare provider before getting a tattoo. Tattooing involves breaking the skin, one of your body's main protective barriers. This means you can be more prone to skin and blood infections such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). These infections could be contracted if equipment used for your tattoo is contaminated with the blood of an infected person (see HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C Quick Facts)

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/body_art ; <http://1.usa.gov/15Gw69u>; and <http://www.safe-tattoos.com>.

This page was last reviewed June 11, 2015