

Tattoos

Before having a tattoo done, you should find out about the risks and possible incompatibilities. If you have any doubts, talk to your family doctor.

You should know that there is a risk of:

- **Transsion of infections:** hepatitis B, C, HIV and other viruses. You have to wait 4 months before you can give blood (it is not allowed in some countries).
- **Local inflammatory reactions**, these should not last more than 1 or 2 weeks.
- **Allergic contact dermatitis**, some people have a skin inflammation as a direct result of the tattoo dye or caused by subsequent exposure to the sun. A granuloma or acute eczema appears on the skin with intense inflammation soon after applying the dye or else years later (in the case of mercury and chrome dyes). These reactions are quite frequent for these colorings:
 - Black henna used for temporary tattoos contains paraphenylenediamine (PPD).
 - Reds derived from mercury.
 - Greens derived from chrome.
 - Yellow derived from cadmium sulfide.
 - Blue derived from cobalt salts.
 - Ochre with iron oxide or cadmium salts.
 - White or beige with titanium, zinc oxide or lead carbonate (they cause slight reactions).
- **Difficulty in recognizing skin cancer** in the area (for example, melanoma).

Tattoos are not suitable if you have a history of: Hypertrophic or **keloid** scars.

- **Local infections**, as these can spread: warts, herpes, fungal or bacterial infections.
- **Skin conditions** like psoriasis, lichen planus, dermatographism, moderate-severe acne, melanoma.
- **Other diseases** like congenital heart disease, prosthetic heart valves, kidney failure, diabetes or immunodeficiency.
- **Drug therapies like** blood thinners, isotretinoin or immune suppressors.

You should not have a tattoo done in summer, if you are pregnant, if you take anticoagulants, as a treatment to correct skin problems or if you suffer from a psychological disorder.

Precautions:

- Make sure you are up to date with the **vaccination calendar**, especially with the tetanus vaccine.

- Don't go on an empty stomach or under the influence of drugs.

- Professional tattoo artists should have a certificate of sanitary hygiene accrediting them as such on display.

They should disinfect the skin with antiseptic, wash their hands first, put on new gloves and not touch anything apart from the necessary material. They should use sterile material and disposable needles. It is better if they use a needle rather than a tattoo gun. They should give you instructions about how to care for your skin afterwards.

- **The tattoo parlor** should be clean, well-ventilated (air-conditioned) and have a wash basin. It must be registered with the Health and Consumer Department and have a local authority sanitary license. Townhalls usually have a list of tattoo parlors that comply with the legislation.

- **Under 16's** must be accompanied by a responsible adult and need written permission from their parent or guardian.

After having a tattoo done:

- You should be given a **receipt** and **complaint forms** should be available for customers in case of need.

- **Skin care:** follow the instructions for as long as you are told, usually from 2 to 4 weeks, depending on the part of the body. In general, you should wear clean, loose clothing and wash your hands before touching the area. Wash the area twice a day with antiseptic soap, keep the skin dry and don't scratch it (if a scab forms do not pull it off).

- **Avoid the sun, sunbeds, saunas, swimming pools and beaches** for at least 2 weeks.

- **Avoid using creams, makeup, vaseline, cleansers, etc.**

- **If you have a fever** or the skin **inflammation** lasts more than 2 weeks even though you follow the care instructions, you should see your family doctor.

