

Tattooing (including permanent makeup) involves puncturing the skin with a needle. **Our skin is our greatest defense against infection**, so it is important to understand that tattooing can lead to infections.

Infections can be caused by equipment inadequately sterilized between uses or clients, using equipment meant for one-time use more than once, contaminated ink, or improper tattoo aftercare.

The types of infections can range from a skin or soft tissue infection, such as a **“Staph” infection** at or near the tattoo site to a blood-borne pathogen infection, such as **hepatitis B or C**.

It is important to consider a few factors about the tattooing process to keep yourself safe and healthy from infection.

References and Additional Resources:



KY HEALTH SERVICES

THE DOs & DON'Ts OF PREVENTING INFECTIONS: **TATTOO PARLORS**

AVOIDING INFECTION The risk of infection can be decreased if proper infection prevention strategies are followed such as:



RESEARCH

Checking with your health-care provider before getting a tattoo if you are **susceptible to getting infections** or if you have any **underlying medical conditions** such as diabetes, weakened immune system, bloodborne diseases, bleeding disorders, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and more.

Foregoing tattoos on skin that has a **rash, pimples, evidence of infection, open lesions, or sunburn**.

Staying **well-hydrated** and ensuring the tattoo site is moisturized in the days leading up to the session.



PREPARATION

Researching the tattoo parlor and tattoo technician/artist before undergoing the procedure. Licensure requirements and inspection processes vary by state.

- Is there a visible and unexpired certificate from the health department?
- Is the parlor clean, organized, and is the equipment in good condition?
- Look for handwashing sinks, separate workstations, and non-absorbent, easy to-clean floors, walls, and surfaces.

Remember: *First impressions are important! The tattoo parlor should appear clean and tidy. Speak up and ask questions. If you suspect that a tattoo parlor is in violation of sanitary standards or state law, call the local health department to inform them.*



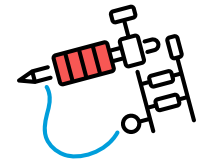
TOOLS

The work area should be organized, with **little-to-no clutter**, to prevent contamination of clean supplies.

The parlor should use **separate small containers of ink** that are used for only ONE client and discarded after use.

The tattoo technician/artist should perform **hand hygiene** frequently and wear gloves to protect the client and themselves.

Sterile needles must be used for **only ONE tattoo session, on only ONE client**.



PROCEDURE

Reusable needles, tips, and tubes that hold them to the machine should be **sterilized in an autoclave following each use**. The machine cannot be sterilized, and so it should be covered with plastic during use and disinfected between clients. When possible, disposable equipment (like needles) should be used.

The tattoo site should be **cleaned and sanitized before the procedure** and is usually dressed with a sterile bandage after the procedure. Specific tattoo care can vary between technicians.

AFTER CARE



You should be provided with **written or verbal instructions on how to care for the tattoo site** and how to prevent infection. Instructions may include how to keep the site clean and dry, how often to wash the site, how long to keep the site covered, and what to put on the tattoo site to help with healing. If you are not provided with this, do not hesitate to ask for a resource from your technician. **Contact your healthcare provider if you notice signs of possible infection such as redness, pus, or swelling.**