

Tattoos and Permanent Make-up

TATTOOS

Tattoos and permanent make-up are really popular. Here is what you should know.

A tattoo is a mark or design on the skin. A permanent tattoo is meant to last forever. It is made with a needle and colored ink. The needle puts the ink into the skin.

Types of Tattoos

Today, there are many different types of tattoos. For example:

- Permanent tattoo—a needle is used to insert colored ink underneath the skin.
- Permanent make-up — These permanent tattoos look like make-up, such as eyebrow pencil, lip liner, or eyeliner.
- Henna tattoos — A natural plant dye called henna is used to stain the skin. This method does not use needles. The color lasts 2 to 3 weeks. Henna is only approved for use as a hair dye. It should not be put on the skin.
- Temporary tattoos — The “tattoo” design is on a piece of coated paper. It is put on the skin with water. Temporary tattoos last only a few days.

Why would someone want a tattoo?

- To be in style
- To save time from putting on makeup
- Because they have trouble putting on makeup
- To restore a natural look after surgery on the face or breast
- Because they have lost their eyebrows or eyelashes

What are the risks?

- You may not like your tattoo even if it was done well. Not liking the tattoo is the most common reason people give for having one removed.

Other risks:

1. Infection — Unclean equipment can transfer infections from one person to another person, for example Hepatitis and HIV. It is important to make sure that the equipment is clean and germ-free (sterile).
2. Allergic Reactions — They are rare, but can cause a lot of trouble.

Remember...

Most tattoos are **permanent!!!** It's very hard to get rid of them. Sometimes it cannot be done at all. And it often means surgery and scarring. Think very carefully before getting a tattoo.

Questions to ask yourself before you get a tattoo:

Why am I getting a tattoo?

Can I live with this tattoo forever?

Does the “artist” clean everything and use it the right way?

Will I take good care of the tattoo?

Tattoos and Permanent Make-up (cont.)

What is the right way to get a tattoo?

- The tattoo artist cleans the skin and tools so that they are germ-free (sterile).
- The person getting the tattoo takes care of it as it heals.

I don't like this tattoo anymore. How can I get rid of it?

There are several ways to remove a tattoo but they don't always work. It can cost a lot of money. And you may need a lot of treatment. Here are some choices:

- Laser treatment is the most common way to remove a tattoo. Pulses of light from the laser break up the tattoo ink. The body itself gets rid of the treated areas over the next several weeks. Most tattoos need more than one laser treatment to be fully removed.
- Sanding down to lower layers of skin is another way to remove a tattoo. The area to be sanded is frozen first to lessen pain. This method is called dermabrasion. It may leave a scar.
- Salt can be used to "sand" the skin, too. The area is numbed first to lessen pain. Then a mixture of table salt and water are used to rub the skin. This method is called salabrasion. It is used less often.
- Acid can be put on the skin to remove the tattoo. This method leaves a scar.
- You can have surgery to remove the tattoo.
- New colors can be put into the skin to mask or cover up the old ones.

Does the FDA control tattoos?

- No, the FDA does not watch over tattoo parlors. Each state has its own laws for this.

To Learn More...

FDA: 1-888-463-6332 (1-888-INFO-FDA)
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/cos-204.html>