

Notes on ear piercing guns and ear piercing

Stud guns are designed for ear lobes only. Do not allow anyone to pierce any other part of your body with a stud gun.

If you are getting your ears pierced with a stud gun, make sure it is a sterile, single-use, cartridge model.

Make sure the body artist meets the same requirements as for any other body piercing.

Cosmetic tattooing (also called permanent makeup)

Cosmetic tattooing is most commonly performed in beauty salons for eye and lip lining and may be advertised as permanent makeup rather than as tattooing. If you are thinking of having one of these procedures, consider the following information.

Remember, cosmetic styles change and although the work will fade over time, it is a permanent procedure.

Make sure that the body artist has permission of the local government authority to operate from their premises. This means the premises meet minimum health and safety standards.

Ask to see the body artist's training certificates and photographic examples of their work – if they can't show them to you, find another body artist.

Ensure that a new sterile needle is attached to the tattooing machine in your presence; DO NOT agree to a procedure if the needle is already in place.

Ensure that the body artist meets with the requirements set down in the health and safety section of this pamphlet.

Taking care of a new piercing – the dos and don'ts of care

DO NOT TOUCH your new piercing unless you have washed your hands well first, that goes for other people touching the piercing too.

DO NOT USE alcohol-based cleaning solutions. They will slow healing and may cause skin irritation.

DO NOT SHARE jewellery with friends, even in healed sites.

DO NOT INSERT nonsterile jewellery or jewellery made of metals other than those recommended by the operator.

DO NOT ALLOW the body fluids of others to come into contact with your piercing until the site is completely healed.

DO LISTEN to the care advice you are given by the body artist, and follow it.

DO RETURN to the body artist when advised, or if having problems.

DO AVOID swimming until the piercing is healed, contaminated water is likely to pose a risk of infection.

DO AVOID having sex for at least a week after a genital piercing, check with your body artist as some genital piercings take longer to heal.

DO SEE A DOCTOR at the first signs of infection, do not wait until pus forms or jewellery cannot be removed.

DO BE AWARE THAT you may experience tissue rejection which means the piercing site may swell, the skin colour changes and the area becomes itchy. This is different from infection where there is pus and usually pain.

Taking care of a new tattoo – the dos and don'ts of care

DO NOT PICK OR SCRATCH at a new tattoo, this will slow the healing time and may lead to secondary infections.

DO NOT SOAK a tattoo in water or other solutions. If in frequent contact with water, use a barrier cream over the site until healed.

DO NOT OVER USE healing creams – only apply when the skin feels it is drying out.

DO NOT WEAR tight clothing over the tattoo, or clothing that has been washed in harsh detergents.

DO LISTEN to the care advice you are given by the body artist, and follow it.

DO RETURN to the body artist as advised, or if having problems.

DO HAVE CLEAN HANDS ONLY to touch a new tattoo, do not let others touch it until it is healed.

DO APPLY SUNBLOCK (15 to 30+) to prevent fading of the tattoo.

DO AVOID swimming until healed.

DO USE the creams recommended by the studio for healing.

About blood-borne infections

Hepatitis C

This virus is carried in the blood and can result in long-term illness affecting the liver. The equipment used in tattooing and body piercing can pose a major risk of transmission of hepatitis C if contaminated with infected blood. There is no preventative vaccine.

Hepatitis B

This virus can result in long-term illness affecting the liver and is transmitted by blood-to-blood contact and by sexual activity. A safe, effective vaccine is available.

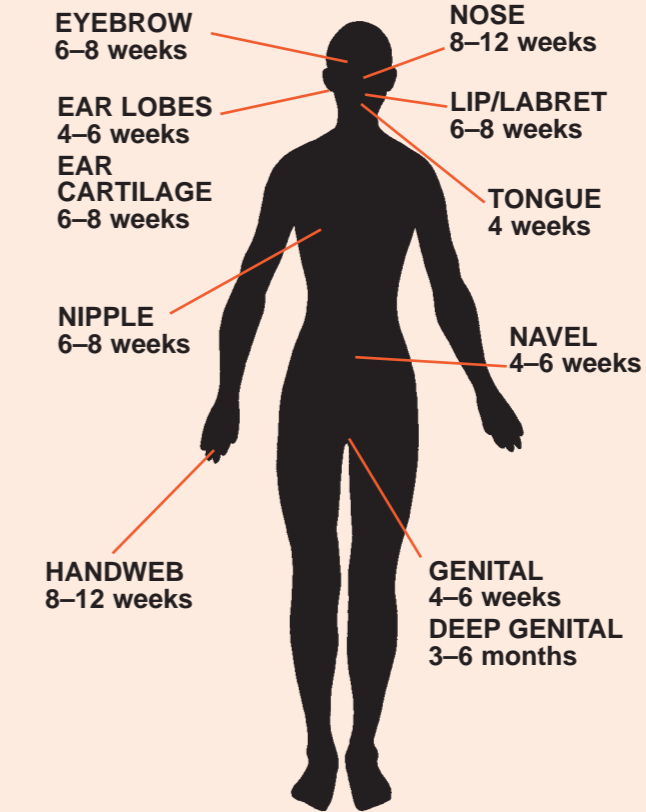
HIV/AIDS

HIV is the virus that results in the disease known as AIDS. It is transmitted through blood-to-blood contact and sexual activity. The equipment used in tattooing and body piercing if contaminated with infected blood can pose a risk of transmission of the virus to you. People are infected for life. As yet there is no vaccine or cure.

Bacterial infections

There are numerous infections that can be spread through poor hygiene practices, such as poor body artist standards or by you not following the aftercare instructions given. At worst they can be life threatening, at least; the body art you have had will be damaged.

Approximate healing times for body art



Flesh tunnels can take 2–4 months or longer to heal depending on size and location
TATTOOS take approximately 2–3 weeks to heal
BRANDING takes approximately 3–6 weeks to heal.

For further information please contact your State or Territory:

- Health Department (ask for Environmental Health or Communicable Diseases);
 - Hepatitis C Council.

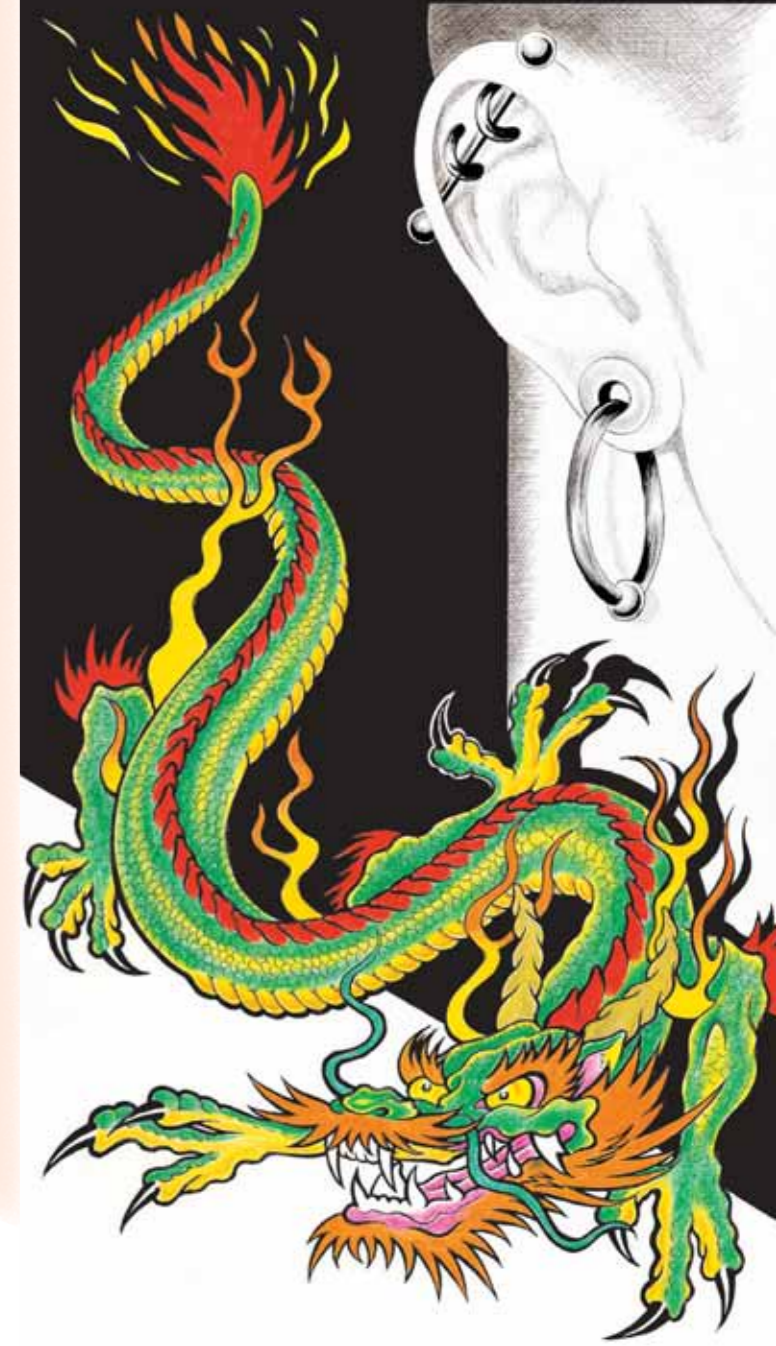
For further copies please phone the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing publications hotline on 1 800 020 103 (ext.8654).

First published by the Health Department of Western Australia 1999.

Acknowledgments

Artwork contributed by Radomir Klacar. Thanks to all the West Australian body artists who have shared their knowledge in the development of this pamphlet.

Healthy Body Art



What is body art?

Tattoos, body piercing, branding, cutting and scarification are all body art. In Australia the most popular forms of body art are tattoos and body piercing.

Tattoos are permanent designs on the skin. They are made with coloured inks put under the skin with a machine.

Body piercings are holes in the skin made so jewellery can be worn. The holes are made with a sharp instrument.

Whenever you consider any kind of body art you need to remember there is always a risk of infection.



What you need to know

Body art is very popular and people of all ages and backgrounds are getting tattoos and having different body parts pierced. Most people go to established studios, to professional body artists who work with high standards of infection control. Others may place their health at risk by going to amateurs. This guide will help you find the right body artist.

Body art is a very personal thing, and there are many reasons people choose it. It is important to be clear about *your* reasons for getting body art and to know how to get work that looks good, and doesn't harm your body and health.

If body art is not done properly you could suffer nerve damage, scarring or infections. Be sure to choose someone who has extensive experience working in the body art industry.

YOUR BODY ART WILL BE AS GOOD AS THE ARTIST YOU GO TO, AND THE WAY YOU LOOK AFTER IT WHILE IT HEALS.



Preparing yourself for body art

Do not rush into getting your body art done. A tattoo should be considered PERMANENT. Although tattoos can be removed, it is expensive and your skin will never be the same as it was. **THINK BEFORE YOU INK.**

Body artists suggest you consider these points before getting anything done.

- Be as healthy as possible, if you're sick it will slow down the healing and you'll have more risk of getting a local infection.
- Avoid alcohol for 24 hours before a procedure; alcohol in your bloodstream tends to increase bleeding during a procedure.
- If you are considering multiple piercings or tattoos, start with a small one to see how you manage the procedure and its care.
- If you know you have multiple allergies and want a tattoo, see if the studio will do a patch test with the dyes, before you have the full procedure.
- If you are not sure where to place the tattoo or the style, ask the studio if they can apply a stencil of the design for you to 'wear' before you have the full procedure.

- If you want to use your own jewellery for piercing, take it to the studio the day before to be checked and sterilised. Remember, jewellery you buy from places other than body piercing studios will not be sterile and may not be of suitable quality or size. Discuss jewellery selection with your body artist.



Making it a comfortable experience

If you're nervous about the procedure there are some things you can do to feel more comfortable.

- Take a friend with you for moral support.
- On the day of the procedure make sure that you have eaten something and have had enough to drink (not alcohol!) so that you are not dehydrated.
- Some procedures can be painful, but it passes quickly if there are no complications. Breathing exercises can help you relax during the procedure.
- Some people feel lightheaded or faint afterwards. This is due to a change in blood levels of adrenaline and the body's natural painkillers. If you know what to expect you can deal with it. Also let the body artist know how you're feeling.



Where to go

- Do not consider letting friends or people who work outside of established business premises do your body art.
- Cheap is not always good, compare prices – you need to pay for good – quality work.

- Shop around, ask friends who have had good art work done, who they recommend.
- Find a studio where you feel comfortable, and where staff answer all your questions.
- Select a studio that has 'Aftercare Service' – so you can have follow-up visits to check the work and get help for any problems.
- When choosing a body artist don't go by the art on the walls. Ask to see examples of the body artist's personal work – if they can't show you, find another studio.
- Most studios have body artists who are members of the professional associations for their industry. These require that members meet professional standards of infection control and artwork, but you should discuss the points raised in this pamphlet with all body artists, whether they belong to professional associations or not.
- Some States and Territories provide infection control courses for body artists. Studios need to be approved by local government but this is more about standards for premises than about art technique and infection control standards.



Arriving for your procedure

What your body artist needs to know

The body artist wants you to be comfortable and safe. At the same time they need to take care of their own interests and health, so there are a few things they will ask you to do, such as:

- Sign a statement saying you are over 18, if you don't have proof of your age.
- Give them your medical history, particularly any infectious skin diseases or communicable diseases you may have.
- Tell them of any metal or chemical allergies you have.
- Let them know if you have any problems with skin healing, especially if keloid scarring occurs (keloids are raised scars, more common in people with dark skin).
- Talk about the style of body art and where you want it placed. Remember that body art that is very noticeable may hurt your chances of getting some jobs, it may also be embarrassing in some social situations.
- Tell the body artist whether you have had alcohol or drugs that day. Most body artists will not work on people who are under the influence.



Your health and safety

Make sure that the body artist:

- Knows the Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures and can talk about it with you.
- Has a clean and tidy, well-lit studio. (The body artists should be clean and tidy too!)
- Washes hands at the beginning and end of the procedure, and whenever there is a need to take a break in the procedure, such as answering the phone.
- Wears new, disposable gloves throughout the procedure. Once the

body artist puts on gloves, nothing should be touched except your skin, the needle or tattooing machine, or the jewellery. A good body artist will change gloves many times during the course of a procedure.

- Uses sterile equipment. The body artist should be able to explain how equipment is sterilised and have a functioning autoclave steriliser on the premises.
- Assures you that any jewellery used for body piercing is new – recycled jewellery can have tiny scratches, which can irritate a new piercing and cause infection.
- Uses new needles and razors and other equipment for skin penetration and that they are thrown out immediately after being used.
- Has everything that is used to penetrate your skin in sterile, sealed bags that are opened in your presence.
- Uses preparation equipment, such as stencils and spatulas, only once.
- Transfers the tattooing inks into sterile containers and discards them following the procedure (not returning them to stock).
- Puts cleaning solutions, creams and anything else that is put on the skin into single-use disposable containers.
- Cleans and disinfects your skin thoroughly before the skin is penetrated.
- Cleans the work areas between clients.

