

If you are thinking of getting a tattoo, it is best to place yourself in the hands of a professional tattooist. Be aware that proper conditions of hygiene are necessary to avoid infections such as hepatitis or HIV. Some tips for having tattoos done safely are given below.

1 Select your tattooist

It is important to select your tattooist well. Try to talk to this person to see whether you like their work and whether they do it in a way that is safe both for them and for you.

2 Tools

Needles, inks and containers, etc. should ideally be new for every tattoo. When this is not possible, they should be boiled for 15 minutes to reduce risks (with bleach if you can obtain it) and then wiped with a clean cloth and alcohol. The tattooist should also use new latex gloves each time.

3 Inks

Tattoo ink can also be a channel for transmitting infection. Although it should ideally be new ink, in prison it is often made from other materials. If this is the case, make sure that the material is as hygienic as possible (ideally sterilised with boiling water or a flame) and that the water used in the process has been boiled previously and placed in a clean container.

4 The tattooist's work

The way the tattooist works is also very important to reduce the risks. The work should be done on a flat surface and the flow of the ink must be constant. It is also important not to penetrate all the layers of the skin. Failure to do these two things increases the risk of infection and diminishes the quality of the tattoo.

5 After the tattoo

Once the tattoo is complete it is important to throw away all the disposable material, as it may pose risks for other people. You should wash the area of the tattoo with water and neutral soap twice a day and bandage it with sterile gauze (which should be changed each day). The scarring process will take about two weeks and itching will occur (indicating that it is scarring properly). Do not scratch as this could increase the chances of infection in the area and/or alter the drawing or colours of the tattoo. Although the use of moisturising cream may ease itching, make sure that the cream is properly hygienic (the tube should ideally be new and used only by you).



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