



# **Think it through before having a tattoo**

Information you need  
to know before having  
a tattoo

## What is a tattoo?

A tattoo is made by placing a pigment or dye into the second layer of the skin, known as the dermis. The dye is put into the skin using an electronic tattoo machine which has vibrating needles.

A good tattooist will know how deep to place the needles into the skin. If it is too shallow you will get a poor tattoo and if it is too deep, you may bleed and experience intense pain.

## Are there any age limits?

In the UK it is a criminal offence to tattoo anyone under the age of 18 years, even with parental consent. The tattooist should ask for some ID, such as a passport or driving licence if age is in doubt.

## What are the risks?

It is important the tattooist follows high standards of hygiene to prevent infections from occurring, such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. Bacteria can be introduced into the skin which may cause infection and abscesses. Blood poisoning can sometimes occur which can be fatal. If an infection does occur, you may also experience some permanent scarring.

Tattooists in Wiltshire have signed up to the Tattoo Hygiene Rating Scheme (THRS) and follow specific ways of working and standards of cleanliness required to achieve their rating.



In Wiltshire tattooists are expected to wash their hands between clients and different tasks; change aprons, use clean and sterile equipment and keep their studios clean and hygienic.



Other risks from tattooing are reactions to dyes and other products used to clean the skin or aftercare products.

If you are concerned about a tattoo you should return to the tattooist or seek medical help through your GP or your local Minor Injuries Unit (MIU).

### **Does it hurt?**

Your skin will be repeatedly punctured during the procedure and so you will experience some pain. The level of pain will depend on other factors:

- Your pain threshold
- Where you have the tattoo
- How good your tattooist is.

Your tattooist should not use local anaesthetic to numb the area as these can damage the skin and you may react to it.

### **Where should I go to have a tattoo?**

Make sure you go to a tattooist who is registered with the local authority. There must be a registration certificate for each person that tattoos on the premises and this must be displayed in the studio. You can also check their Tattoo Hygiene Rating on the following website: [cieh-cymruwales.org/THRS\\_Wiltshire.html](http://cieh-cymruwales.org/THRS_Wiltshire.html)

### **What else should I look out for at the studio?**

The tattooist should explain the procedure to you and take some personal details including some medical details.

The tattoo studio should be clean and there should be no smoking within the studio. Dyes should be decanted into little pots for your procedure only and then disposed of.

Some equipment may be single use or disposable. This will be pre-packed in individual sterile packs. Reusable equipment is normally made of metal and this should be sterilised in an autoclave.

Before you leave the studio, your new tattoo should be covered and should be kept in place for at least an hour. This is to keep it clean.

Your tattooist should explain how to look after your tattoo and give you written information about what creams to apply; what activities should be avoided such as sun beds and swimming. The skin will take about 4–5 weeks to heal.



## What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind there are a number of ways for a tattoo to be removed but all be very expensive. The procedure is painful and is not always successful.

Scarring often occurs and there may be a skin colour difference between your normal skin and the tattooed area.

Tattoos should be considered as permanent. It is a big decision and should be thought through carefully.

## Further advice and information

For further advice and information please contact Public Protection

Tel: **01225 770443**

Email: [publicprotectionwest@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:publicprotectionwest@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Information about Wiltshire Council services can be made available on request in other languages and formats such as large print and audio. Please contact the council by

Tel: **0300 456 0100**

Email: [customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Web: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk)

