

Frequently Asked Questions

How does Indiana define “tattoo” and “body piercing”?

Indiana Code 35-42-2-7(a) and 410 IAC 1-5-19 defines “tattoo” as, “any indelible design, letter, scroll, figure, symbol or other mark placed with the aid of needles or other instruments; or any design, letter, scroll, figure or symbol done by scarring upon or under the skin.” Indiana Code 35-42-2-7(b) and 410 IAC 1-5-3.6 defines “body piercing” as “the perforation of any human body part other than ear lobe for the purpose of inserting jewelry or other decoration or for some other nonmedical purpose.”

What should I look for when I go into a tattoo parlor or body piercing facility?

- No person may operate a facility without a license. The license shall be posted in a conspicuous place and the license shall be renewed annually.
- Temporary or mobile tattoo or piercing facilities are prohibited.
- All tattoo and body piercing artists must receive training in bloodborne pathogen disease transmission and proper handling of infectious waste.
- The Indiana State Department of Health’s “Patrons Rights” poster must be publicly displayed.
- Each facility shall have a written policy with the requirements for universal precautions, the methods for the proper disinfection and sterilization of contaminated reusable items, safe handling of infectious waste and sanctions for failure to follow.
- Patron’s records shall be kept for two years. The records will include: a photocopy of driver’s license or state identification, patron’s name, address, age, date of work, work design or jewelry description and the name of artist or piercer performing the work.
- Tattoo artists and piercers should not work when sick.
- Handwashing facilities in each work station with approved water source, soap and single use towels separate from public restrooms; hands shall be washed before putting on gloves and after removal of gloves.
- Disposable gloves must be worn when tattooing or piercing and when decontaminating work surfaces.
- All needles must be sterile, single use and individually packaged in sealed peel packs.
- Disinfection and sterilization equipment kept in an area that is not accessible to the public.
- Sterilization equipment must be tested monthly and results provided to the Marion County Public Health Department.
- Infectious waste must be treated in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration Standard, 29 CFR 1910.1030.
- Hepatitis B vaccine received or waiver signed by each artist or piercer within the facility.

What training must tattoo and body piercing artists have?

Yearly training on bloodborne pathogen disease transmission for tattoo artists, body piercers and anyone who has contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials is a requirement of 410 IAC 1-5.

Tattoo artists or body piercers are not required to receive training or certification on the tattooing or body piercing process.

Are there restrictions on who can get a tattoo or body piercing?

Indiana Code 35-42-2.7 (c) and (d) makes it a Class A misdemeanor to provide a tattoo or body piercing to a person who is less than 18 years of age. A person may provide a tattoo or body piercing to a person less than 18 years of age if a parent or legal guardian is present and provides written permission.

What kind of infections could I risk from getting a tattoo or body piercing?

Exposure to blood and other possible infectious material (OPIM) may increase the risk of contracting an infection and/or communicable disease. The risk of a negative health outcome is reduced when universal procedures are followed. The risk of infection or contracting a communicable disease is small when the tattoo artist or piercer is following the law. There has not been a documented case of HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) from getting a tattoo or body piercing. However, there have been documented cases of getting Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C when unsterile equipment was used for tattooing and body piercing.

Other possible negative health outcomes or health considerations include:

- Bacterial infections
- Metal allergies/allergic reactions to jewelry used in piercings
- Damage to nerves
- Keloids/thick scarring at the tattoo or piercing site

For more information, contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/BodyArt.htm

What are some signs of an infection?

Talk to your tattoo artist or body piercer about what to expect after getting a tattoo or body piercing.

It is important to do everything possible to avoid infection. Your risk of infection is small if you conscientiously attend to the aftercare. Although some swelling around the tattoo or body piercing is normal, you should seek the advice of your health care provider or doctor if you have any of the following signs of infection after getting a tattoo or being pierced:

- Thick yellow or green discharge
- Continued oozing or bleeding
- Red streaks or hot sensation moving away from area tattooed or pierced
- Pain that continues to get worse
- Any unusual pain or swelling

Could I become allergic to a tattoo?

Yes, but this is very rare. Sensitivity reactions occur most frequently to dyes containing mercury, chromium, cadmium and cobalt. The newer pigments do not contain these metals.

Could I become allergic to a body piercing?

Yes, and this is most likely due to the reaction from the metal in the jewelry. While it is possible to have an allergic reaction to any metal, stainless steel is usually the source of most metal allergies. Stainless steel contains carbon and nickel, which can both cause reactions. The condition "nickel dermatitis," prompted by nickel's direct and prolonged contact with the skin, can be characterized by redness, itchiness, flaking, burning, swelling and the hole becoming enlarged. The incidence of nickel contact allergies in the overall adult population is estimated at 10 percent with a higher prevalence in women than men according to the U. S. Food and Drug Administration.

For more information, contact the U.S. Food and Drug Administration:

www.fda.gov/cdrh/patientsafety/tips/allergies.html

Are certain types of jewelry recommended for new piercings?

Currently, state rules do not include minimum jewelry standards. The Association of Professional Piercers recommends the following broad minimum standards for jewelry placed in new piercings:

- Surgical Implant Stainless Steel, CrNiMo 316LVM, ASTM F-138
- Surgical Implant Titanium Ti6A4V ELI, ASTM F-136
- Niobium (Nb)
- 14 karat or 18 karat solid white or yellow gold
- Must be free of nicks, scratches, burrs and polishing compounds
- Must have internal tapping (no threads or posts) for 16 gauge and thicker
- Rounded ends on rings
- Threads 1.2 mm for 14 gauge and 12 gauge; .080 mm for 10 gauge

If you have had previous allergic reactions or suspect you may have an allergic reaction, talk to your health care provider about jewelry contents. After your piercing has healed, decorative jewelry may be placed in the piercing. Healing times may vary based on the piercing location.

For more information, contact the Association of Professional Piercers: www.safepiercing.org/standards.html

How long of a healing time should I expect with my body piercing?

Pierced Body Part Healing Times

Ear lobe	6 to 8 weeks
Ear cartilage	4 months to 1 year
Eyebrow	6 to 8 weeks
Nostril	2 to 4 months
Nasal septum	6 to 8 months
Nasal bridge	8 to 10 weeks
Tongue	4 weeks
Lip	2 to 3 months
Nipple	3 to 6 months
Navel	4 months to 1 year
Female genitalia	4 to 10 weeks
Male genitalia	4 weeks to 6 months

For more information, contact the Center for Young Women's Health, Boston, Massachusetts

www.youngwomenshealth.org/body-piercing.html