

If you are thinking about body art

Think about today

Different states have different laws, but the federal government does not regulate tattoo artists, tattoo pigments, or the body piercing industry. In many states, you have to be at least 18 to get a tattoo or piercing anywhere other than your earlobes.

Think about tomorrow

Tattoos are really multiple puncture wounds. If not properly done and cared for, they can cause pain, scarring, and infections. Even when done correctly, most piercings take from 2 to 8 months to heal.

Think about the future

Your elaborate tattoo or piercing may be cool now, but it might make it harder to land that dream job in the future.

Think about forever

Tattoos don't cost much to get but removing them is difficult and expensive. What you think looks perfectly great today may look perfectly awful tomorrow.

NOTES

Have you done your research?

Before you get a tattoo, you'll need to do some research to find the answers to several important questions.

- Tattoo artists have different styles. Ask to see the artist's book of designs to make sure you will get the kind of tattoo you want.
- Does your state require a license for a tattoo artist or tattoo parlor? If so, make sure the one you choose meets the state requirements.
- Will the tattooing and piercing instruments be disposable or reusable? If they are reused, they need to be sterilized in an autoclave, just like medical and dental instruments.
- Will the tattoo artist wear disposable gloves? Use a fresh supply of ink for every client? Use an antiseptic soap for cleanup? All of these precautions will protect your health.

Aftercare for tattoos

- Wash 3 times a day with a mild soap and apply a thin layer of a nonsensitizing antibiotic cream.
- Keep the tattoo covered until healed and do not disturb scab formation.
- Do not swim or use a hot tub until the skin is completely healed.
- Apply sun blocker to the tattoo area regularly to avoid excessive burning and sun damage.

Aftercare for body piercings

- Select high-quality jewelry with surgical steel, 14 carat gold, or titanium to minimize allergic contact dermatitis.
- Apply ice to the piercing frequently to reduce pain and swelling.
- Do not swim or use a hot tub until the skin is completely healed.