

Body Piercing and TATTOOS

A LITTLE HISTORY



Tattooing has linked to early societies such as those in Egypt, Peru, Japan and the Philippines. The art of tattooing dates as far back as 2000 B.C. and has transformed from a ritual in many ancient cultures to popular way for an individual to express oneself in today's world.



Spiritual rituals and function for armor brought about the now trendy form of body modification known as piercing. The earliest recorded body piercing was that of the nose about 4,000 years ago. In today's society many adolescents pierce any part of the body to show self-expression and individuality.



Body modification as a whole, including piercing and tattooing is often linked to rebellious lifestyles, abrasive personalities and delinquency. "Individuals often associate tattoos and body piercings with gang members, prisoners, military personnel, or rebellious teenagers (Armstrong, Schmidt)."



A popular way to stretch a body piercing is a process called "gauging" which involves some form of tapers that are inserted into the piercing to gradually make the hole larger.



Model, actress and new "spokes model" for Hepatitis C, Pamela Anderson actually acquired the disease from her then husband, Tommy Lee (musician) when the couple were tattooing each other using the same needle.

RISKS OF “GETTING INKED” OR PIERCED



According to the FDA (U.S.A. Food and Drug Administration) there are several negative side effects when “getting inked.” Such effects are infection, allergies, scarring, granulomas, and MRI complications.



Infection is the largest risk when getting tattooed or pierced as dirty needles can pass infections such as hepatitis, HIV and other bloodborne diseases.



Ink pigment plays a large role in several effects of getting a tattoo; many allergies can arise from the ink as well as granulomas which are small bumps that can form around the tattoo or piercing because the body detects a foreign object.



“FDA has not approved any tattoo inks for injection into the skin, and many ink pigments used are industrial strength colors suitable for printers' ink or automobile paint (FDA).”



The biggest risk when investing in a body piercing is the development of keloids, which are large scars of overgrown tissue around the site of a piercing. These often are removed with surgery or injections of steroids.



When gauging a piercing too quickly a “blow out” can occur which is when the area around the piercing becomes infected and there is a layer around the piercing of blood and puss, often resulting in incredible pain.



There are two ways to take care of a tattoo after getting inked, a “dry process” and a “wet process.” The dry process, though it runs the risk of scabbing, allows the color of the tattoo to stay brighter and is a good idea for individuals who have breakouts.



Scaring can occur if one does not properly take care of a piercing after the individual takes out the piercing.

STATISTICS



According to the most recent Harris Poll (in Summer of 2003) 15% of Americans (which is about forty million residents) have a tattoo. Thus breaking the rebellious image linked to getting inked or pierced.



“The 2003 Poll revealed that 83% of the respondents to the survey had no regrets about their choice to get a tattoo, while 17% said they did regret having chosen to get a tattoo. Of those who regretted getting a tattoo, 16% said it was because of a person’s name being the tattoo, or being included within the tattoo (Swan).”



Regardless of race, age, or political standing, the 2003 Harris Poll proves that tattooing is an art that is a common interest among all people. According to the poll about the same number of African Americans, Caucasians and Hispanic residents as well as about the same amount of Democrats and Republicans all had at least 1 tattoo.

HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010



Although Healthy People 2010 does not specifically address the topics of Tattoos and Body Piercing many can link these to the objective listed for Hepatitis C, which falls into the Healthy People 2010 objectives.



The objective for Hepatitis C according to Healthy People 2010 is stated in part 14-9 which fall under Immunization and Infectious Disease.



Problem: 2.4 new cases of hepatitis C per 100,000 population in selected counties were reported in 1996.



The target goal in regards to Hepatitis C is 1 new case per 100,000 according to Healthy People 2010.



“Although some studies have found an association between tattooing and HCV infection in very selected populations, it is not known if these results can be generalized to the whole population. Any percutaneous exposure has the potential for transferring infectious blood and potentially transmitting bloodborne pathogens (e.g., HBV, HCV, or HIV); however, no data exist in the United States indicating that persons with exposures to tattooing alone are at increased risk for HCV infection.” (CDC.gov, 2008)



In the last 20 years only about 1% of people with hepatitis C reported to CDC's sentinel surveillance system gave a history of being tattooed.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM



According to the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, disposable piercing needles, tattoo needles, should be discarded into a sharps disposal container. This container should also be emptied often and marked clearly. Each tattoo/piercing shop should have a “exposure control plan” and limit the amount of contact with sharp needles to prevent being pricked.



All areas and tools should be sterilized and gloves should be worn at all times, as well as hands should be washed often. The sterilization machines should be tested often to assure accuracy.



Research the tattoo parlor that you are choosing, make sure the artists are clean with their practices and open all products in front of you if disposable, or make sure the needles are sterile.



After getting a body piercing or tattoo make sure to carefully follow all instructions given by the artist or piercer to prevent any complication.

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