

		West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources			
		MANUAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROCEDURES			
Section	Disease Control	Date	April 5, 2010	Procedure #	DC-11
Subject	Risk Factors Associated with Tattoos			Page	1 of 2

The purpose of this memorandum is to comply with changes made by the West Virginia Legislature during the 2010 Legislative Session to Chapter 16, Article 38 Section 3 of the West Virginia Code. **These changes will be effective June 9, 2010.**

§16-38-3(a)(4) was amended to require the owner or tattoo artist to discuss with the patron the risks involved in the tattoo requested, including the potential that a tattoo may interfere with the clinical reading of a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) study, should the patron intending to be tattooed ever encounter a medical need for such a study. The owner shall provide the patron with written information regarding the possible complications that may arise from receiving a tattoo. The written information shall be prepared by the Department of Health and Human Resources. Receipt of the information shall be acknowledged in writing by the patron. The owner or tattoo artist shall also keep and maintain the acknowledgment as part of the patron's record pursuant to the provisions of subdivision (5) of this subsection.

Prior to the administration of a tattoo, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources has determined the following risk factors be discussed with the patron based on information provided by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- **Allergic reactions.** Reports of allergic reactions to tattoo pigments have been rare. However, when they happen they may be particularly troublesome because the pigments can be hard to remove. Occasionally, people may develop an allergic reaction to tattoos they have had for years.
- **Granulomas.** These are small knots or bumps that may form around material that the body perceives as foreign, such as particles of tattoo pigment.
- **Infection.** Unsterile tattooing equipment and needles can transmit infectious diseases such as hepatitis and cause skin infections such as ("staph") bacteria. Improper aftercare of a tattoo can also cause skin infections.
- **Keloid formation.** If you are prone to developing keloids -- scars that grow beyond normal boundaries -- you are at risk of keloid formation from a tattoo. Keloids may form any time you injure or traumatize your skin and occur more frequently as a consequence of tattoo removal.
- **MRI complications.** There have been reports of people with tattoos or permanent makeup who experienced swelling or burning in the affected areas when they underwent magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). This seems to occur only rarely and apparently without lasting effects. Tattoo pigments may also possibly interfere with the clinical reading of an MRI. However, the risks of avoiding an MRI when your doctor has recommended one are likely to be much greater than the risks of complications

from an interaction between the MRI and tattoo or permanent makeup. Instead of avoiding an MRI, individuals who have tattoos or permanent makeup should inform the radiologist or technician of this fact in order to take appropriate precautions and avoid complications.

- **Removal problems.** Removal of a tattoo can be a painstaking process, usually involving several treatments and considerable expense. Complete removal without scarring may be impossible.

References [§ 16-38 Tattoo Studio Business](#)
[Food and Drug Administration](#)

History

Attachments