How do I pick a tattoo artist?

By law, anyone who carries out tattooing must be registered. They should display their registration certificate where their customers can see it. The studio where they operate has to be registered too. A registered premises has been inspected by an Environmental Health Officer to make sure they operate in strict hygienic manner and that they comply with local bylaws. Do not be tempted to use an illegal tattooist because it is cheaper. Their premises may look clean and looks ok, but remember the equipment may not be sterile.

A registered Tattooist will:

- Ask you for ID if they think you look under 18 yrs of age. It is illegal to tattoo anyone under the age of 18 - even with parental consent.
- Ask for, and you provide your medical history before tattooing. If you have any allergies let your tattoo artist know so they can do a patch test with the dyes to make sure you don’t have a reaction.
- Wear clean clothing, gloves and apron.
- Use fresh sterile needles and ink for every customer.
- Provide you with tattoo aftercare information.

If you have any concerns about a tattooist in your area or want a list of locally registered tattooist please contact the relevant local authority.

- **Central Bedfordshire Council**
  - 0300 300 8000
- **Bedford Borough Council**
  - 01234 718099
- **Luton Borough Council**
  - 01582 510 330

For further information go to www.nhs.uk and search tattoos.

Public Health working in partnership with your local Environmental Health department.
Thinking of getting a tattoo?

Is it safe?

Is it right for you?

Do you know the facts?

This leaflet aims to help you make the right and safe choices when having a tattoo.

Do I really want to have a tattoo?
It is important that you think about this carefully as tattoos are permanent. Fashions change therefore what you like now, you may not like in the future. You should never be pressured by anyone into having a tattoo.

Tattoo removal can be expensive, painful, take a long time, can leave scarring and it does not always work.

What does it involve?
Ink is inserted into the skin using a small needle. An electric tattoo machine is used to drive the needle with the ink into the second layer of the skin.

Will it hurt?
This will depend on the individual’s pain threshold, the type and size of tattoo and where it is being done on your body. There is no anaesthetic used, but an experienced registered tattooist will know how deep to push the needle into the skin to avoid intense pain and excessive bleeding.

Are there any risks?
There are risks, if your tattoo site becomes very red, swollen, itchy or painful you may have an allergic reaction or an infection.

If after having a tattoo you have a high temperature, feel unwell or worried about the tattoo site you must contact your GP straight away.

Tattooing also carries the risk of viruses like HEPATITIS B & C, HIV which can cause serious, life threatening illnesses. These can be transferred into your body if the equipment used is contaminated with someone else’s infected blood.