



OSHAcademyTM
Occupational Safety & Health Training

Tattoo and Body Art Safety

Creating living art is a unique talent, but it puts tattooists at risk of coming in contact with their client's blood. This means artists may also be exposed to bloodborne pathogens, such as hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). This course will discuss ways to prevent cross-contamination and how to properly clean and sanitize tools and machines.

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OSHAcademy Course 607 Study Guide

Tattoo and Body Art Safety

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Contact OSHAcademy to arrange for use as a training document.

This study guide is designed to be reviewed off-line as a tool for preparation to successfully complete OSHAcademy Course 607.

Read each module, answer the quiz questions, and submit the quiz questions online through the course webpage. You can print the post-quiz response screen which will contain the correct answers to the questions.

The final exam will consist of questions developed from the course content and module quizzes.

We hope you enjoy the course and if you have any questions, feel free to email or call:

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Course Introduction

Creating living art is a unique talent, but it puts tattooists and piercers at risk of coming in contact with their client's blood. This means artists may also be exposed to bloodborne pathogens, such as hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

From wearing gloves to sanitizing tools and machines, there are ways to prevent these serious and often deadly diseases.



This course will discuss the things you, as an employee, can do to lessen the risks associated with tattooing and body piercing. It will also discuss ways to prevent cross-contamination and how to properly clean and sanitize tools and machines.

Course Objectives

This course will focus on each of these topics from the employee's perspective. The course will also explain the employer's responsibilities.

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- Explain the risks of tattooing
- Explain your rights as an employee under the universal precautions
- Describe what a sharps disposal container is used for
- Describe ways to prevent needlestick injuries
- Explain ways to prevent cross-contamination
- Explain the use of gloves and other protective equipment
- Describe skin infections among tattoo recipients
- Describe how to disinfect surfaces
- Describe how to clean tools and equipment

Module 1: Safety Considerations

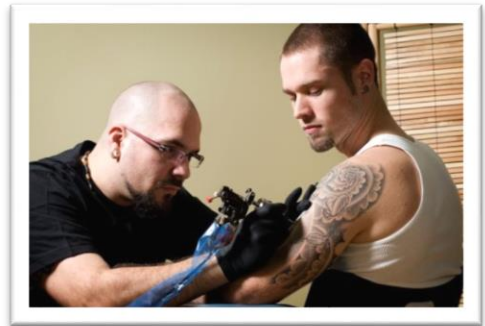
Introduction

Artists can be exposed to bloodborne pathogens, such as viruses and bacteria, during the set-up, procedure, break down, and clean-up stages. These exposures can occur through needlesticks, contact with dried blood on equipment or surfaces, or blood splashes in the eyes, nose, or mouth.

Keeping a clean shop and using safe work practices, ensures a safe and professional atmosphere for artists and clients.

Universal Precautions and Regulations

Universal Precautions – which some tattoo artists refer to as a “sterile chain of events” – is a set of precautionary steps defined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to prevent the spread of disease. Tattoo artists are *required* by law to follow Universal Precautions for the safety of themselves and their clients. Any artist found not following this sterile chain of events can have their licensing and/or certification revoked. Any studio found not following the guidelines can be shut down. The basics include things like using gloves and other barriers on anything the artist comes in contact with, disinfecting all surfaces and general cross-contamination prevention. When these things are followed, the chances of being exposed to staph infection of any kind are **very** minimal.



Tattooing and piercing regulations and recommended practices vary from state to state in the United States. To learn more about your state's regulations associated with tattooing and bloodborne pathogens, click here: (http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/body_art/stateRegs.html)

Prevent Needlestick Injuries

Exposures to bloodborne pathogens can happen by getting stuck with a used needle or getting cut by a sharp instrument that has blood on it.

Certain practices can reduce needlesticks and other sharps injuries. Here is some additional information for preventing exposures to blood in the body art industry.

Sharps Disposal Container

Disposable piercing needles, tattoo needles, and razors must be discarded into a sharps disposal container. Body artists must throw away used or contaminated sharps into a sharps disposal container. It is safer to put disposable razors into a sharps disposal container rather than the trash. This will protect the person changing or handling the trash bag from getting cut with a used razor. Sharps disposal containers must be kept in a place that is near a work area so artists can quickly and safely dispose of used sharps.



If sharps disposal containers become full, they must be replaced so the containers do not spill over. An artist could get a needlestick if he or she throws away a sharp item into a full container. It is a good idea to replace sharps disposal containers when they are 2/3 full.

Sharps disposal containers must be closeable, puncture resistant, leak-proof, and labeled. These features allow for safe disposal in a container that is familiar to all workers.

When handling or disposing a used sharp, tattooists and piercers should use a tool instead of their fingers to pick up or hold the sharp. This may reduce needlesticks.

Sharps Incident Log

Though OSHA regulations do not generally require a body artist to keep an injury log, a record of cuts from sharps can increase awareness of sharps-related injuries. A Sharps Incidence Log lets artists know how often sharps-related injuries happen and under what conditions.

The Sharps Injury Log must include at least:

- date of the injury
- type and brand of the device involved (syringe, suture needle)
- department or work area where the incident occurred
- explanation of how the incident occurred

Recording needlesticks and cuts from sharps also allow artists to learn from their mistakes and others' mistakes to help reduce exposures.

Exposure Control Plan

As required by OSHA, an exposure control plan is written by a shop owner and describes the steps an employer will take to minimize employee exposure to blood. The details included in an exposure control plan should be specific to each shop.

Click on the link here for a Model Exposure Control Plan:

http://www.oshatraining.org/courses/mods/755/Model_Exposure_Control_Plan.doc

OSHA Interpretation

Instead of disposing of a single-use sharp device into a regulated sharps container immediately upon completion of the tattoo procedure, it is not uncommon for many tattoo artists to re-sterilize the entire device in order to break off the needle configuration. Then they could re-use the bar itself. The justification for this practice is generally related to lower cost. However, this procedure requires the "breaking, bending, or shearing" of a sharp, which is expressly prohibited by OSHA.

So, how does the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (1910.1030) apply to this practice?

The scope and application of the standard is "dependent on reasonably anticipated occupational exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials (OPIM)." Since tattooing and piercing generate blood, workers in this industry would fall under the scope of the standard.

Proper implementation of a bloodborne pathogens exposure control plan, infection control procedures, and standard precautions protect not only workers from potential exposure, but clients, as well.

The standard requires the use of engineering and work practice controls to eliminate or minimize employee exposure to blood and OPIM. Where occupational exposure remains after the institution of these controls, personal protective equipment must also be used.

Understandably, engineering controls for tattoo needles may not be commercially available, therefore the use of proper and safe work practices carries a higher level of importance. Safe work practices would include the immediate disposal of contaminated needles into an appropriate regulated waste container, such as the Sharps Disposable Container.

Bending, recapping, breaking, and/or shearing contaminated needles requires additional manual manipulation, which poses a greater risk of injury. If safer needle devices do become available, an employer must evaluate, select, and implement appropriate devices, based on

employee feedback.

Therefore, it is OSHA's position that in the tattooing and piercing industry, proper work practices must be followed, including the immediate disposal and proper containerization of single-use contaminated needles.

An employer must also ensure the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, gowns) depending on the types of exposures that may be anticipated (e.g., splashes, splatters, drips). Again, employees with occupational exposure to blood must receive full coverage of the standard, including, but not limited to:

- the hepatitis B virus vaccination
- post-exposure evaluation and follow-up
- appropriate housekeeping and decontamination procedures

Module 1 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

- 1. What would happen to a tattoo artist who is NOT following universal precautions?**
 - a. They will receive a warning from OSHA.
 - b. Their licensing can be revoked.
 - c. Their certification can be revoked.
 - d. Both B and C are correct.

- 2. Exposures to bloodborne pathogens can happen by getting cut by a sharp instrument that has blood on it.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 3. Why should a tattooist use a tool instead of their fingers to pick up or throw away a used needle?**
 - a. Reduces needlesticks
 - b. Protects the patient
 - c. Protects the tattoo artist
 - d. It is easier

- 4. The Sharps Injury Log must include all of the following, except ____.**
 - a. date of the injury
 - b. name of employee
 - c. explanation of how incident occurred
 - d. department where incident occurred

Module 2: Reducing Exposure

Risks Associated with Tattooing

Tattooing carries risks of infection and bloodborne disease transmission as well as allergic reactions, prolonged bleeding, swelling, scarring and general discomfort. Existing medical conditions such as allergies, heart disease, diabetes, skin disorders or conditions that affect the immune system may increase the risk of complications from tattooing.

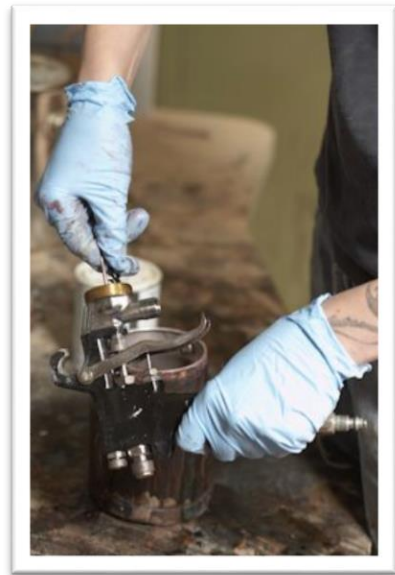
If an artist is exposed to another person's blood, the artist should notify the shop owner and immediately seek medical attention. If treatment is needed, it is more likely to be effective if it begins soon after the exposure happens.

Other precautions specific to tattooing include:

- checking gloves for pinhole tears during tattooing, since petroleum-based ointment erodes latex
- pouring ink in advance, using clean tissue to open ink bottles during tattooing and preventing nozzles from touching contaminated surfaces
- patting tubes dry after rinsing during color changes -- never blowing excess water from them
- spraying liquid soap into a tissue, not directly onto bleeding area, since blood can become airborne when the spray hits it
- giving pens used for drawing on the skin, which should be medical grade and sterile, to the client

Tattoo artists must also take special safety measures regarding their hands. Gloves help prevent disease transmission from bodily fluids, but bacteria thrive in the warm, damp environment they create. This means that artists must:

- Wash hands thoroughly and often.
- Inspect hands for cuts or sores and cover them with bandages.



There are several safety precautions specific to tattooing, including gloves and pouring ink in advance.

- Remove hangnails and keep nails short to prevent punctures to gloves.
- Refrain from tattooing when experiencing lesions, dermatitis or allergic reactions.

Reducing Cross-Contamination

Cross-contamination is the act of spreading bacteria and viruses from one surface to another. Since bloodborne pathogens can live on objects and surfaces for up to a week, germs could be spread when surfaces are not disinfected the right way or if equipment is not cleaned and sterilized between clients.

Some examples of cross-contamination are:

- A piercer places his tools on a counter that has not been disinfected and then uses the tools for a piercing procedure without sterilizing them.
- A tattooist, while working on a client, answers the phone without removing her gloves. By not removing her gloves, the artist may spread bacteria and viruses from the gloves onto the phone. Other people using the phone could then be exposed to a disease.

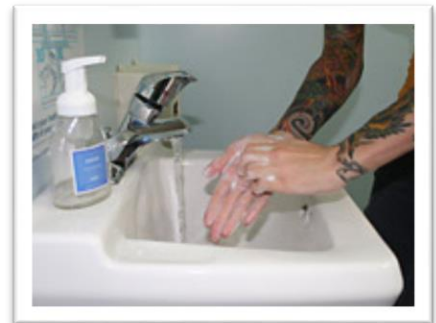
Let's take a look at some of the preventive practices that may reduce cross-contamination in the body art industry.

Gloves

Wash hands before and after wearing disposable gloves. Gloves are always worn while working with equipment and clients, changed when necessary, and are not reused. Gloves should NOT be worn in place of washing your hands.

Hand Washing

Tattoo artists and body piercers need to wash their hands often. Hand washing can get rid of most of the disease-causing organisms on a person's hands. When wearing gloves, heat and moisture build up. This creates the right conditions to allow bacteria to reproduce. To lessen the spread of viruses and bacteria, tattooists and piercers should wash their hands before AND after wearing gloves.



Disposable Supplies

Tattoo artists and piercers need to use disposable "single-use" supplies whenever possible. Disposable supplies, such as pigment caps, razors, rinse cups, and sterilized pre-made needle bars, should be used once and disposed of. The possibility of being exposed to blood while cleaning the devices will be avoided if you use disposable supplies.



Skin Infections Among Tattoo Recipients

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA), often referred to simply as "staph," is a type of bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States. Most of these skin infections are minor and can be treated without antibiotics.

MRSA is transmitted most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection.

MRSA skin infections can occur anywhere, including tattoo parlors. However, some settings have factors that make it easier for MRSA to be transmitted.

These factors are:

- frequent skin-to-skin contact
- compromised skin (cuts or abrasions)
- contaminated items and surfaces
- lack of cleanliness



Pustules resulting from a MRSA skin infection in a tattoo recipient: Ohio, 2005

The CDC held a study regarding MRSA skin infections among tattoo parlors in Ohio, Kentucky and Vermont.

Let's take a closer look at the findings. Gloves were reportedly worn by all tattooists in four of the six tattoo parlors, however, the tattooists failed to take other infection-control measures, such as changing gloves between clients and performing appropriate hand hygiene, skin antisepsis, and disinfection of equipment and surfaces.

Five patients reported seeing lesions on the hands of tattooists that were consistent in description with MRSA skin infection. All of the patients interviewed in the Ohio clusters reported receiving their tattoos in public places from tattooists who used homemade tattooing equipment. The equipment consisted of guitar-string tattoo needles and computer ink-jet printer cartridges for dye.

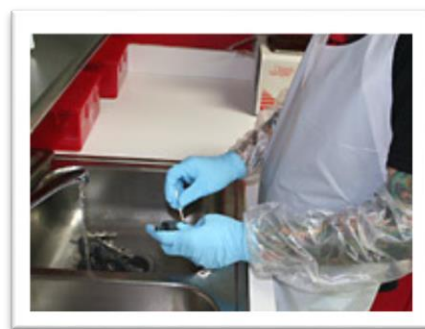
There are several ways a tattoo artist can protect himself and the recipient from MRSA skin infections.

Disinfecting Surfaces

Body artists should disinfect surfaces, such as the client's chair and counter space, between procedures. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a list of registered disinfectants that are made to kill certain bacteria and viruses. EPA-registered tuberculocidal disinfectants are best for cleaning surfaces contaminated with blood. The germ that causes tuberculosis is one of the most difficult to kill. Any disinfectant that claims to be able to eliminate the tuberculosis germ can also kill HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C viruses. Many disinfectants need to stay on surfaces for a specific amount of time to fully disinfect the surface before being wiped down. The instructions included with the disinfectant should note the amount of time needed to properly disinfect an area.

Cleaning Tools and Equipment

Reusable tools and equipment should be cleaned and then sterilized to remove viruses and bacteria. Cleaning is the first step in removing viruses and bacteria from equipment. Reusable tools and equipment should first be washed before being sterilized. If washing tools manually, piercers and tattooists should use a brush or similar tool whenever possible. Ultrasonic cleaners work well to clean tools in hard-to-reach places and reduce the amount of time contaminated equipment is handled. Shop employers should check with the owner's manual to be sure the machine is cared for correctly.



Sterilization Machines

Sterilization machines must be regularly tested and serviced. Autoclave machines use steam, pressure, and temperature to kill bacteria, fungi, and viruses. Gauge readings and the color change of indicator strips on autoclave packaging are not reliable ways of ensuring an autoclave is sterilizing correctly. If the machine is not well cared for, it may not reach the conditions needed to sterilize reusable equipment at an acceptable level. Routine spore tests can check if an autoclave is sterilizing correctly. Employers should contact their local health department to find out how often spore tests should be done. The employer should also ensure the autoclave is regularly serviced. The owner's manual should provide information about the maintenance schedule.



Module 2 Quiz

Use this quiz to self-check your understanding of the module content. You can also go online and take this quiz within the module. The online quiz provides the correct answer once submitted.

1. **If an artist is exposed to another person's blood, they should immediately ____.**
 - a. notify the shop owner
 - b. seek medical attention
 - c. wash the infected area before calling for help
 - d. both A and B are correct
2. **The following are all precautions specific to tattooing, except ____.**
 - a. pouring ink in advance
 - b. spraying liquid soap into a tissue
 - c. keeping pens used for drawing on the skin for future use
 - d. patting tubes dry after rinsing during color changes
3. **_____ is the act of spreading bacteria and viruses from one surface to another.**
 - a. Cleaning
 - b. Cross-contamination
 - c. Spraying
 - d. Pouring
4. **Why should tattoo artists wash hands before AND after wearing gloves?**
 - a. Lessens the spread of viruses and bacteria
 - b. Sanitation purposes
 - c. To decrease the chance of infection
 - d. To protect the client
5. **When should a tattoo artist disinfect surfaces?**
 - a. Only at the end of the workday
 - b. Between procedures
 - c. Only in the morning and before the clients arrive
 - d. In the middle of a procedure