**Tattoo and Piercing Checklist**

Consider your personal risks and benefits before getting a tattoo or piercing:

* Do you have a chronic condition (such as, autoimmune conditions, diabetes mellitus, or cardiac diseases) that might make it difficult for you to heal after getting a tattoo or may put you at increased risk for skin infections or systemic infections? If so, talk to your doctor before getting a tattoo or piercing.
* Are you usually satisfied with your decisions or do you regret them? Do you think you will regret your tattoo in 1 year, 5 years, or 10+ years?
* Read up about tattoo removal and understand that you may not be able to remove the tattoo in every situation and it can be painful and expensive to remove.
* Have you had a tetanus vaccination (or Td or Tdap) in the last 5 to 10 years?

**Do your research:** Find a safe and reputable establishment for a tattoo or piercing

Go to a tattoo or piercing establishment and observe the professional’s aseptic technique, which means that anything that touches your or another customer’s skin directly during the procedure, such as needles, should either be new and single use or sterilized by autoclave.

Observe the tattoo artist or piercing professional or ask questions to ensure the following aseptic techniques are used:

* The procedure area is uncluttered and cleaned between each customer.
* The tattoo artist or piercing professional washes his or her hands and uses new, disposable gloves for each procedure and replaces those gloves if he or she needs to leave the procedure area for any reason (such as, to answer a phone).
* New, sterile needles are in sealed, sterile packages that are opened in front of the customer.
* The inks used for tattoos are dispensed in single use containers or poured into a new, disposable container for each customer.
* The tattoo artist uses sterile water to dilute tattoo ink.
* The skin to be tattooed or pierced is throughly cleaned with an antimicrobial solution.
* Other equipment that does not come in direct contact with the skin is covered and disinfected after each use.

It may also be helpful to ask the tattoo artist or piercing professional to see their aftercare instructions and ensure they are thorough and include signs and symptoms of complications after a tattoo or piercing as well as when to seek further medical evaluation.

See Health Services or a medical professional if the body part that was tattooed or pierced swells, turns red, feels hot, starts to ooze pus or smell bad, or if you get a fever.

**Reputable Resources**

* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov
* Association of Professional Piercers: <https://www.safepiercing.org/>
* Alliance of Professional Tattooists (APT): <http://www.safe-tattoos.com/>
* Mayo Clinic information on Tattoo Removal: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/tattoo-removal/about/pac-20395105>