



Body Art: Tattoos and Piercings

Body art is a popular form of self-expression. Tattoos and body piercings are typically created by professional tattoo artists and body piercers and appear on the body as permanent markings and decorative metal.

The health and safety procedures for body art establishments and the artists are regulated by the Portsmouth Health Department under *Chapter 3 of the Code for the City of Portsmouth Regulating Body Art Establishments*.

How to Obtain a Permit to Operate a Body Art Establishment

- Submit the annual body art establishment application plus the \$1,500.⁰⁰ annual fee, along with a separate application for each body artist.
The applications are on the [Portsmouth Health Department](http://portsmouth.vdh.virginia.gov) web site at <http://portsmouth.vdh.virginia.gov>
- The facility and each body art artist meet the requirements of *Chapter 3 of the Code for the City of Portsmouth Regulating Body Art Establishments*.

Considering Body Art?

Reputable tattoo artists and body piercers follow strict health and safety practices to protect themselves as well as their clients from [tuberculosis](#), and bloodborne pathogens such as [hepatitis B](#), [hepatitis C](#), and/or [human immunodeficiency virus \(HIV\)](#).

If you decide to get a tattoo or body piercing, make sure you go to a licensed facility and take the time to discuss with your body art artist the safety procedures. They should explain the process and clarify what they do to keep everyone safe and healthy by using single-use sterilized needles and razors, washing hands, wearing gloves, keeping surfaces clean, and using inks from reputable manufacturers. *Persons under the age of 18 must obtain their parent or guardian's written approval, and the body art procedure done in the parent or guardian's presence.*

Safety Procedures

- **Use single-use, disposable needles and razors.**
Disposable piercing needles, tattoo needles, and razors are used on one person and then thrown away. Reusing needles and razors is not safe.
- **Safely dispose of needles and razors.**
Used needles and razors should be thrown away in a biohazard-labeled, disposable container to protect the client and the person handling the trash bag from getting cut.
- **Wash hands before and after putting on disposable gloves.**
Gloves are always worn while working with equipment and clients, changing when necessary, and are not reused.
- **Clean and sterilize reusable tools and equipment.**
Some tools and equipment can be reused when creating body art. Reusable tools and equipment should be cleaned and then sterilized to remove viruses and bacteria.
- **Frequently clean surfaces and work areas.**
Chairs, tables, work spaces, and counters should be disinfected between procedures to protect both the health of the client and the artist.
- **Purchase inks from reputable ink manufacturers.** <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/UCM143401.pdf>
Many states may require them to hold a business license, but there is no regulation or oversight of the product itself.
- **Prevent [non-tuberculous Mycobacterial \(NTM\) skin infections](#) by diluting inks with sterile water.**
Cases of NTM have occurred from inks being diluted with non-sterile water.

For more safe and healthy practices related to body art, please see www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/body_art