

# COSMETICS FACTS

From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Tattoos and Permanent Makeup



*The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reminds you to get the facts before you make the decision to get a tattoo.*

There are several types of tattoos you may be seeing, including some that are permanent and others that are temporary. People get tattoos for various reasons, such as beauty, self-expression, or cultural events.

Whatever your reason for choosing to get a tattoo, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reminds you to know the facts *before* you make the decision to get a tattoo.

### Types of Tattoos

**Permanent Tattoo:** A needle inserts colored ink into your skin. Permanent tattoos last a lifetime.

**Permanent Makeup:** This is a type of permanent tattoo. A needle inserts colored ink into your skin to look like eyeliner, lip liner, eyebrows, or other makeup.

**Henna:** Plant dye called henna or mehndi is used to stain your skin. A henna tattoo lasts for 3 days up to a few weeks.

**Black Henna:** This type of tattoo may or may not contain henna and may contain hair dye or other dye to make it darker and longer lasting.

**Decal temporary tattoos:** Some decal tattoos have a backing that is removed with water when applying the design directly to your skin. Others have a backing that sticks to your skin. Decal tattoos may last for a day or up to a week or more.

### Tattoo Risks

Tattoos can have health effects, and some of these effects can last a lifetime. Tattoo risks include:

- **Infections and serious illness** from unclean tattoo tools, practices, or products.
- **Allergic reactions** to the inks or stains can cause skin problems, such as rashes.
- **Other skin problems**, like increased chance of sunburn, rashes, redness, or scarring.
- **Swelling and burning** of some permanent tattoos when you get an MRI test.

If you have questions about **safety practices at tattoo parlors**, contact the state or local health department that regulates them in your area.

In addition, be sure to **tell your healthcare provider** about any tattoos you have *before* undergoing any type of **medical procedure**.

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## FDA's Role

It is important to understand FDA's role in monitoring the safety of tattoos. You should also be aware of what has *not* been approved by FDA.

### FDA has not/does not do the following:

- FDA has not approved any inks for injection into your skin.
- FDA has not approved henna or hair dye for use on your skin. Some people have reported serious problems after using temporary tattoos marketed as henna or black henna.
- FDA does not regulate practices in tattoo parlors. Usually, this is the job of state or local health departments.

### FDA does take the following actions to promote consumer safety:

- FDA monitors problems from tattoos and permanent make-up.
- FDA alerts the public at <http://www.fda.gov/cosmetics> when we become aware of a problem.

When FDA becomes aware of a problem, we work with tattoo ink suppliers to make sure that their recalls of problem inks are effective. FDA encourages individuals to report problems to FDA in either of these ways:

- Contact **MedWatch**, FDA's Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program:
  1. By Phone: **1-800-FDA-1088**
  2. Online: File a voluntary report at <http://www.fda.gov/medwatch>
- Contact the **Consumer Complaint Coordinator** in your area. Locate one here: <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem/ConsumerComplaintCoordinators>

## Removing Your Permanent Tattoo

Permanent tattoos can be hard *and* painful to remove. Removal may also take several treatments and cost a lot of money. Options for tattoo removal include:

**Laser Removal:** FDA has approved certain laser devices to remove tattoos. Lighter colors such as yellow, green, and red are more difficult to remove than darker colors such as dark blue and black. It may take 6 to 10 treatments to remove a tattoo. Some side effects may include bleeding, redness, or soreness.

**Surgery:** Tattoos can sometimes be removed by cutting out the tattooed skin, then sewing the skin back together. Other times, the skin can be sanded down to remove the tattoo. Either way, there will be some scarring.

**Ointments and Creams:** FDA has *not* approved tattoo removal ointments and creams or do-it-yourself tattoo removal kits. These products may cause skin rashes, burns, or scars.



Be sure to talk to your doctor about the options for tattoo removal, and remember to keep these facts in mind:

- You may not be able to completely remove your tattoo.
- Removing your tattoo could leave a scar.



To learn more about tattoos, visit: <http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ProductsIngredients/Products/ucm107327.htm>