

Health, Beauty & Fitness

Tattoos — a form of artistic expression and beauty

But consider the health aspects too say local tattoo artists

Thanks greatly in part to water cooler gossip surrounding such reality television shows as *Inked* and *Miami Ink*, there has been a new wave of interest in the art of tattooing.

Although entertaining, these reality shows, often scripted to suit the viewers' needs, wind up depicting less than real situations. As a result, those genuinely interested in getting a tattoo become more hesitant and are often left with questions about the process in receiving a quality piece of permanent artwork.

Having spent the past 10 years operating a tattoo shop, Larry Kovacevic and Jenny Hamp, joint owners and operators at Underground Ink in Georgetown, answer some questions that are often asked.

Here are important things to consider:

1. According to Halton Health Department protocol, the ONLY acceptable way to sterilize tattoo needles and equipment is with a hospital grade sterilizer called an autoclave. There is NO OTHER acceptable form of sterilization. PERIOD.

2. Anyone can save their money and buy an airplane. This does not make them a pilot. Anyone can save their money and buy a tattoo machine. This does not make them a tattoo artist. Ask to see a portfolio. Inquire about the artist's background. How long have they been tattooing? At which shops have they worked before? A point of reference and the answers provided will help

guide you in making an informed decision about the quality of art you will receive.

3. Good tattoos are not cheap, and cheap tattoos are not good. Bargain shop for clothing, food, shoes, etc. DO NOT bargain shop for tattoos. The extra \$50-\$150 you invest will pale in comparison to the piece of artwork in your skin that you will be proud to show off. You could go see the local fly-by-night tattoo person at his or her apartment who offered to do

your tattoo for half price, but more often than not, you will end up paying more getting your bad tattoo fixed or covered-up than you would have by going to a professional in the first place. Tough lesson to learn.

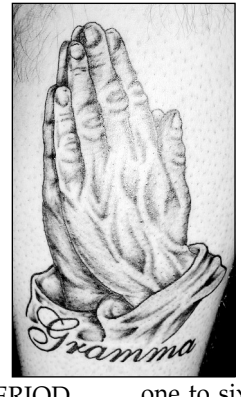
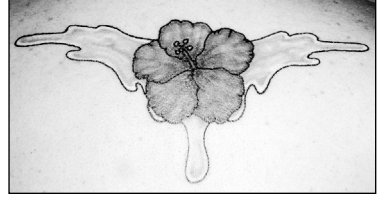
4. Attitude is everything. Getting a tattoo is an extremely personal experience. Once you've chosen an artist in whom you are confident, keep in mind that you may be spending anywhere from one to six, seven, even eight hours in close proximity with this individual. If said person has an undesirable attitude or ego, your tattoo may end up being a constant reminder of the 'jerk' who did it for you. Always meet your potential artist. You should not be made to feel inferior for asking questions, nor should you have to put up with someone who is unwilling to answer these questions or does not have time to book a consultation with you

for further discussion. If this person is not someone that you could picture yourself being comfortable with and able to relate to on a personal level, keep looking. You will find someone who is both exceptional at what they do and a good person to be around.

5. Does it hurt? Yes it does. Although far from excruciating, depending on the spot chosen, there is always some pain and/or discomfort involved in getting one.

6. How old do I have to be? This is a great question for parents. Most reputable tattoo shops will not even consider tattooing someone under the age of 18, and if there is any question, proper identification MUST be supplied. Parents, (and this does not include sisters, aunts, grandparents, cousins or any other relative or friend), that are willing to sign a release form for their son or daughter may do so providing he or she is at least 16 years of age. Again, most reputable tattoo shops will not tattoo a minor under 16 regardless of parental consent. Do keep in mind though, that if your son or daughter does want a tattoo, there is no shortage of 'self-proclaimed' tattoo artists that are willing to tattoo minors. Take this opportunity to help guide your son or daughter in making a safe and well-informed decision.

Other questions that should be asked: How long will it take? Where on my body should I get my tattoo? Where are the least tender spots to get a tattoo? How long will it take to heal? How long before the colours fade?



Jenny Hamp works on a leg tattoo.

Remember, like any other piece of art, a tattoo is an investment that will last forever. Take your time and research well. Ask lots of questions until you find the answers you are looking for. There are no stupid questions and none too complicated to have answered in a pleasant and professional manner. Ultimately, what you are looking for is a piece of art that you are proud of and an experience you are happy to relate for the rest of your life.

Underground Ink will be moving into a new location, 27A Main St. S, Georgetown on Wednesday, Feb. 1. Call 905-805-TAT2(8282) for further information.

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