

## Let's talk about tattoos

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**By Dr Brighton Chireka**

It is becoming trendy to have one and many youngsters are having them as well as adults . Celebrities are leading in having tattoos and there is a lot of debate about whether it is right to have a tattoo or not. This is not the basis of this article as I will leave that to each and every individual to decide. This article is trying to make sure that people are fully informed before they make a decision about having or not having a tattoo.

A close friend of mine emailed me asking me if I was able to compile an article on this issue of tattooing. Another friend of mine whom I told that I was doing an article on tattoos asked me if I was going to discourage people from having one. I told my friend that I was not going to do that but was raising awareness about the risks associated and what people can do to reduce them.

The decision to have a tattoo must not be taken lightly because a tattoo can be permanent. It is very expensive to have it removed and some of the results of removal are not pleasing. In the UK it is almost impossible to get funding for the removal of tattoos under the National Health Services ( NHS).

One need to remember that having a tattoo says a lot about yourself and it may be wiser to think carefully about where you want to have it . Sadly in the world we live we are judged by the way we

dress , look etc so having a tattoo will affect how we are viewed. Having a tattoo can affect one's future marriage or career so one needs to pause and reflect and make sure that it's right for them to have one. Do not succumb to peer pressure as you will soon regret.

There are health risks associated with tattooing which I need to highlight and I will make some suggestions as to how one can avoid them. There is a risk of contaminated equipment being used which can put people at high risk of getting infections such as Hepatitis B and C as well as HIV. There can be also infection of the skin where the tattoo is, resulting in needing antibiotics or if it's severe many need admission or surgery to remove the dead infected tissue. Some people may react to the ink that is used for tattooing and this can range from a mild rash to severe swelling and breathing problems which in rare cases can be life threatening.

### **What can one do to avoid these problems?**

I urge those that want to have tattoos to do a bit of market research and find a tattooist (tattoo artist ) who is registered. When you visit that tattooist look around the place to make sure that it's clean. Make sure that they have a safe way of sterilising equipment and there are not using the same needles all the time. Make sure that each person is having a new set of equipment for them only and not sharing of equipment . If it does not look right please walk away and do not put your health at risk.

I hope you find this article useful. I urge you to share it with friends and also tell us your experiences or any comments and suggestions that you may have. Just remember a tattoo says a lot about you and its permanent as well so act wisely.

This article was compiled by **Dr Brighton Chireka** who is a GP in Folkestone Kent. You can contact him on **[info@docbeecee.co.uk](mailto:info@docbeecee.co.uk)**

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