

## AIDS Thunder Bay

For more information about HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, safer sex, sexually transmitted infections or community resources, get in touch with us.

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Thunder Bay, ON P7B  
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**Region:** 800-488-5840  
(in 807 area code)

**Website:**  
[www.aidsthunderbay.org](http://www.aidsthunderbay.org)

Produced in consultation with:  
**Oceanic Tattoos**  
112 Frederica Street  
Thunder Bay, ON  
(807) 623-7733

**Creation Body Piercing**  
Lower Lever- 215 Red River Rd  
Thunder Bay, ON  
(807) 346-9566

Portions of this pamphlet were originally created by the AIDS Committee of London and are repro-



# Safety in Body Art



## Tattooing, Body Piercing, Hepatitis C, and HIV



**YOU ARE IN CHARGE!**  
It's your money, and your health.

- People can clean, bag and reuse all kinds of tattooing and piercing equipment.
- Ask questions of your prospective artist and feel the responses within yourself.
- Look into their eyes while they are explaining things to you. You will get an idea of who you are dealing with.
- If you feel uncomfortable about something, don't get the tattoo or piercing.
- Use your own common sense and good judgment. You wouldn't want a tattoo or a piercing to cost you your quality of life.
- You may be at risk of getting HIV or HCV if sterile conditions are not met.
- Since HCV & HIV live in blood, you may be at risk from any of the following:

Needles  
Ink  
Inkpots  
Wipe cloths  
Gloves  
Non-sterile work areas



## Transmission

**HIV and HCV** are transferred by blood, therefore body art can be a risk for contracting these viruses.



**HIV** is transmitted when blood, semen, or vaginal fluid from a person with HIV enters the body and blood system of another person. Transmission of HIV occurs most commonly with unprotected (without a condom) anal or vaginal sex. Sharing syringes, works, piercing or tattooing equipment are other ways the virus can be passed on.

**Hepatitis C (HCV)** is usually transmitted when blood from a person with HCV enters the blood of another person. It can also be transmitted through unprotected anal or vaginal sex. Transmission of HCV can happen when needles are shared /reused in drug use, tattooing or body piercing. Sharing items which may contact blood are potential ways to transmit HCV. This includes razors, manicure tools, toothbrushes and injection equipment.

## What is HIV/AIDS?

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus which is found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk and attacks a person's immune system.

Once the virus gets inside your body:

- You may not feel or look sick for years, but you can still infect others.
- Over time, your immune system may grow weak and you can become sick with different illnesses, diseases or cancers which can kill you!

You can be infected with HIV no matter your;

- > sex
- > age
- > sexual orientation

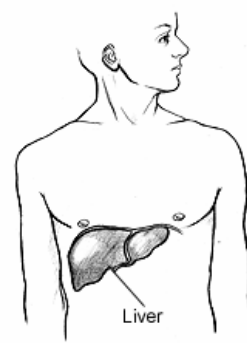
There are treatments that can help you live longer with HIV,

**THERE IS NO CURE OR VACCINE!**

## What is Hepatitis C?

Hepatitis C or HCV is a virus that lives in the blood and causes damage to your liver

Your liver is a filter that cleans toxic stuff out of your blood. HCV attacks



your liver and after a while may cause your liver to stop working properly. Redness and swelling can occur, which can lead to internal scarring. For

some people this will lead to cirrhosis and/or cancer of the liver.

A liver affected by Hepatitis C can eventually lead to death.

The treatments for HCV do not work for everybody.

**There is no vaccine against HCV.**

## Shopping Tips

Here are some points to consider and questions you should ask any artist before you let them do your piercing or tattoo.

- Ask if they use new needles every time. HIV and HCV can be passed on through reused needles.
- Ask how they clean their equipment ... cold sterilization can only be used with, not instead of hot sterilization! Ask to see their autoclave.
- Does the artist use new ink and inkpots for each session of work?
- Does the artist use new wipe cloths and sterile gloves for each session?
- Does the artist use sterile new jewelry for piercings?
- The mental and physical state of both artist and client should be clear.



AUTOCLAVE



CLIENT; Alcohol & drugs thin your blood and you could bleed excessively.

ARTIST; The artist's hands must be steady in order not to rough-cut any work, as that can lead to infection.

- If the artist can't give clear, understandable answers to your questions, or seems reluctant to answer them, don't be intimidated. Just leave & go elsewhere!
- Does the artist give you an aftercare sheet explaining the proper care and cleaning instructions for your new tattoo or piercing?
- Ask around, does the artist have a good reputation, has he/she been around for some time?