

## A professional artist:

- Uses single-use, or sterilized tools.
- Uses latex gloves.
- Uses an autoclave (machine that properly sterilizes equipment).
- Gives you written instructions on how to avoid infections once you have your body art.
- Pours fresh ink into new, disposable containers just for your tattoo design, and opens single-use items in front of you so you know they are clean.

**Professional artists answer questions. If they don't have answers or don't want to answer your questions, find someone else.**

**TIP**

If you've already had an amateur tattoo or piercing, get tested for HIV, and Hepatitis B & C by a doctor or clinic.

Vaccinations against Hepatitis B are also available.

Contact your doctor.

## Important Information

- AVOID unprotected sexual contact or contact with any body fluids in the area of your piercing or tattoo until the area is fully healed.
- If the area becomes red and swollen or if pus develops (beyond the time that your artist tells you is normal) you may have an infection. See your doctor.

### For more information:

[wdghu.org/page.cfm?id=938](http://wdghu.org/page.cfm?id=938)

[hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/tat-eng.php](http://hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/tat-eng.php)

[kidzworld.com/article/3555-is-my-body-piercing-safe](http://kidzworld.com/article/3555-is-my-body-piercing-safe)

[Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)

## SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE

Lunenburg County

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[LunCo@NSSexualHealth.ca](mailto:LunCo@NSSexualHealth.ca)  
[www.LunCo.cfsh.info](http://www.LunCo.cfsh.info)

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United Way of Lunenburg County



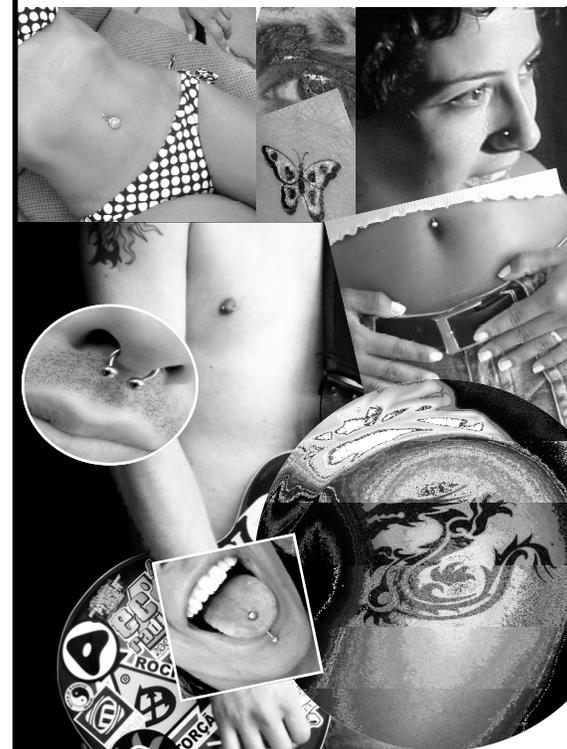
**SEXUAL  
HEALTH CENTRE**

LUNENBURG COUNTY



# Safer Piercing & Tattooing

*to maintain Sexual Health*



**SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE**

Lunenburg County

*Your Source for Sexual Health Information*

The safest way to enjoy your body art is to go to an experienced and qualified tattoo or piercing artist.



## **Tattooing**

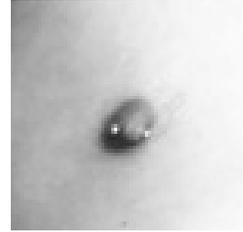
Go to a professional artist. Don't tattoo yourself, especially with a needle, pin or razor — you can get blood poisoning from amateur tattoos and, if sharing the tools, they can also spread blood infections like HIV and Hepatitis.

## **Piercing**

**Tongue piercings** require care and commitment. Talk with a piercer about your options. In a few people, tongue piercings never fully heal, so it's possible to get or give STIs through that opening. Always use a barrier (condom or oral dam) when giving oral sex.



**Nipple piercings** can take 2 - 6 months to heal. No one should put their mouth or tongue on your nipple piercing until it is fully healed.



**Genital piercings** can be done in a variety of places and methods. Some are for ornamentation and some are used for sexual stimulation. Research should be done beforehand to find which one is the best for you.

**Female genital piercings** often involve piercings of the labia and clitoral hood which are generally safer. Piercings that go through the urethra or clitoris are much more risky and only a highly experienced piercer should do them.

A clitoral hood piercing is used for decoration and/or to increase stimulation on the clitoris. Note that what people often call clitoral or 'clit' piercings are actually clitoral *hood* piercings. Genuine clit piercings are rare and only a small number of women are anatomically suited for them.

Clitoral hood piercings are quite safe and heal in 4 - 6 weeks. During healing time, the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is increased. Avoid sex or be gentle and use condoms and oral dams to prevent infection.

**Male genital piercings** often involve piercings of the foreskin and frenulum (skin under the penis) which are safer. Piercings involving the urethra in males have generally fewer risks than in females. Piercings through the entire penis are more risky, more painful, can bleed a lot, and take a long time to heal.

A "Prince Albert" is a piercing through the urethra to the underside of the glans or head of the penis. It is one of the more common male piercings and heals in 2 - 5 weeks.

## **Sharing Jewellery**

Some people love to trade jewellery. The risks are that the Hepatitis B and C viruses could be passed, especially for jewellery in areas where there are more blood vessels. For example, trading earrings is lower risk because the ear lobe is mostly cartilage. Trading belly rings is more risky. To lower your chances of getting infected, disinfect all jewellery properly before putting it on, or, better yet, don't trade at all.

