

Dangers of Body Art

What is Body Art?

Body Art is a popular fad among adolescents and young adults, which includes tattooing or body part piercing. The tattoos are usually on the chest, arms, belly, butts, ankles, or on just about any area of the body. They come in different shapes, design, color and various objects, like a girl, snake, flag, heart, words of protest or love messages. It is estimated that 10% to 25% of young adults (25 and under) have at least one tattoo.

What is Body Piercing?

Piercing the septum of the nose, the eyebrow, jaw, lips, upper part of the ears, the skin of the arm or leg, or the skin of the belly button, to wear a dangling piece of jewelry. Physicians have attended to infected pierced skin of the genitalia with a custom diamond stud.

How prevalent is Body Art?

A survey in one university involving 454 students (236 females and 218 males), which was 14% of the total enrollment, revealed that 23% (106) of them had one to three tattoos. This could well mirror the prevalence in other schools and universities in the country, perhaps higher in big cities, compared to the conservative communities. The most popular sites were the back among women and the arms and hands among men. One hundred twenty nine (51%) of those surveyed had a least one body piercing, 90% of men having had ears pierced, and 54% of the females had pierced navel, 49% ears and 27%, the tongue. Some of both the males and females had pierced nipples, eyebrows and genitalia.

What complications can arise from Body Art?

Infection of the tattooed or pierced skin, transmission of hepatitis B and C, and HIV (AIDS) with either procedure. Allergic reaction, besides pain, swelling and bleeding, are potential complications of tattooing or body piercing. Keloid and scar formation is another. Infection is common because the needle and instruments used for tattooing or body piercing are mostly not medically sterile. A significant number of patients with hepatitis subsequently develop hepatoma, cancer of the liver, which is deadly.

When are these sequelae noted?

The allergic reaction can be observed after exposure to the sun, which leads to severe itching, redness and swelling. Some people are allergic to the dye used in tattooing. Infection takes at least a couple of days before becoming evident.

How can the pigments be removed?

The complete removal of dye pigments is the treatment of choice for this problem. This could be accomplished by surgical excision or carbon dioxide laser. Somehow, Nd:YAG laser or alexandrite laser are not able to remove all pigments.

How is infection of pierced body parts treated?

Infection of pierced body part is managed by removing the foreign body irritant (jewelry, etc) inside the pierced area, washing the part well with water and perhaps disinfectant, and application of topical triple-antibiotic ointment to the infected hole. For severe infection, wound debridement (cutting out rotting tissues) and oral or IV antibiotics may be needed.

Are stick-on “tattoos” safer?

Yes, most definitely. Stick-on “tattoos” are work of art in themselves. They are colorful, beautifully designed and fairly inexpensive. For those who want to wear “tattoos” for special occasions, because of peer pressure, or simply to impress a friend, using the stick-on body art is a lot safer and healthier. Besides, you can wash and peel them off fast anytime you wish.

Why do people do Body Art?

Sporting body art suggests a variety of implications, from personal insecurity, the desire to be noticed, to wanting to “belong” and be a part of a click, or simply to be adventurous, to be in “fashion”, or to be different. Some even do it as a sign of defiance to authority, parental or otherwise, or to gain a “sense of power,” like the macho-man. Some wear them just for the “aesthetic” appearance of the artwork, and others, especially females, feel sexier with them. Whatever the reason may be, the health risks associated with permanent tattooing or body piercing are real and significant.

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What is Botox shot?

Clostridium botulinum is a bacteria, whose toxin produces muscle paralysis among the victims of botulism food poisoning. Advances in medical technology has made it possible for physicians, usually plastic surgeons, to use the botulinum toxin (botox) as a shot in the face to induce transient and localized paralysis in the facial muscles to smoothen out wrinkles between the eyebrows, for frown lines and furrowed brows. The cosmetic effect has been impressive, but this is temporary. Besides this, botox shot has also been found to stave off migraine headaches among individuals who are resistant to conventional therapy.

What is the “new lens” for cataract?

Cataract operations are now routine. Each year, 3 million cataract surgery is performed in the United States. However, the implanted lenses are imperfect due to measurement errors or healing changes. A new lens, which can be recalibrated and fine-tuned weeks after implantation, will be available in Europe in a year, and in the United States in about 4 years.

Does depression lead to osteoporosis?

Yes, it has been noted in recent studies that the incidence of osteoporosis (bone thinning) among depressed individuals is very high, as much as 60%. As such, these persons, usually postmenopausal women, are prone to bone fractures, even when performing non-strenuous normal daily routine chores. Fortunately, physicians today have more advanced diagnostic and therapeutic regimen at their disposal to help these patients.

More wonders from aspirin?

Yes, and it seems that modern science is discovering that this old and common household remedy called a “wonder drug” is showing even greater wonders in clinical medicine. Aspirin can thin the blood to ward off heart attack, stroke, and blood clots in the legs, provide some men protection from prostate cancer, and even reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s. But here is a word of caution: just like any other drug, aspirin is not for everyone, and self-medication is dangerous. Taking aspirin, without physician supervision, could lead to gastrointestinal hemorrhage, bleeding in the brain, etc, which can be fatal. This most inexpensive substance, with a versatile and wide range of therapeutic effectiveness, is indeed one of the greatest drugs of our time. Who knows, perhaps someday we shall “discover” that aspirin is also good for headaches.
