

Tattoos and Diabetes



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Having diabetes doesn't mean that you can't have a tattoo; you just have to make sure that your diabetes is under control before you do.

How Do Your A1C Levels Affect Your Decision?

The strain of getting a tattoo on your body is often worse for a person with diabetes so it is imperative that your A1C levels are within normal range.

If you want a tattoo and your last couple of A1C tests were **under 8%**, and you don't have any neurological problems, heart disease, or kidney damage, getting a tattoo should be safe as long as you keep it clean and keep your blood glucose levels in range. Your body shouldn't have any trouble healing the tattoo as long as they take good care of it.

However, if your last few A1Cs were **9% or over**, or if you're experiencing any neuropathy, circulation, or kidney problems, getting a tattoo could put your life in danger. When your tattoo can't heal quickly, it becomes a playground for bacteria and can lead to infection and eventually **gangrene**.

Placement

Tattoos can be applied to nearly every part of the body. For people with diabetes, there are certain areas that should be avoided including those with poor circulation, such as:

- Lower legs and Buttocks
- Shins
- Feet and ankles
- Common insulin injection sites such as arms, abdomen and thighs.

Tattoos in these places usually take longer to heal, which can lead to complications (such as infection).

Main Risks of Getting a Tattoo:

Allergic reactions to dyes

Skin infection

Scarring

Blood-borne diseases such as HIV or Hepatitis B

Delayed wound healing due to high levels of blood glucose

Infection

Gangrene

Safety and Awareness

What should you look for when looking for a tattoo artist?

- Avoid getting tattoos from a "scratcher" or an untrained/uncredited tattooist. Scratchers have a tendency to reuse needles that can lead to fatal diseases such as hepatitis or AIDS.
- Make sure that you are going to an accredited tattoo artist who follows the California Board of Cosmetology regulations (i.e. needles and equipment properly sterilized to avoid cross-contamination or spread of disease).

Quick Facts:

- Monitor your blood sugar levels carefully **before** and **after** getting a tattoo.
- Make sure your tattoo artist is accredited.
- Avoid getting a tattoo in areas of poor circulation or common insulin injection sites.
- Let your tattoo artist know about your diabetes.
- Keep the tattoo clean to avoid infection