Tattooing is a popular art form that many men and women in prison participate in. If the work is done safely, by a skilled artist who values both their art and the health of their customers, tattooing is an activity that can give a lot of happiness and pride to the artist and customer alike. However, if proper precautions are not followed, tattooing can be a high risk for the spread of diseases like Hepatitis C and HIV.

**CHOOSING AN ARTIST**

Everyone likes to get tattoos in prison, and that’s good because a lot of the best artists are in prison - artists that take pride in their work, and do mega-detail!

When you’re entering a prison, take your time before getting tattooed. Too many people want to hurry, hurry, hurry. Well, don’t rush, because the people who do only end up later looking for a good artist to cover up the hurry, hurry, hurry crap.

The artist should make sure that the art work the person wants is what they will get. If you’re getting a tattoo, make sure you check out as much of the artist’s work as possible to make sure he or she knows what they’re doing.

Take your time when looking for a tattoo, and in picking an artist to do it for you. If you can, try to see the artist in action first, and watch what he or she does. This can really help you make good decisions.

In here it’s very hard to ensure that the equipment (needles, shaft, ink) is clean. The only way to be sure is to have the tattoo artist make the new needle in front of you.

When doing a tattoo, everything the artist uses should be brand new. To make sure of this, the artist that you choose should be able to make up everything in front of you - the needle, shaft for the ink, and tip for the needle. For this, the tattoo artist needs to be adept at making the equipment fast. If the artist can’t make the needle in front of you, tell him or her to drift. Even these precautions cannot guarantee a safe tattoo.

A simple pen or lighter can be used for a tip and shaft. A pack of guitar strings can make endless needles for the price of a few dollars. An easy way to sharpen them is with a small piece of sandpaper stuck to your fan, or by hand using slow pull-away and turn motions. The needle should be razor sharp - the shorter the point, the longer the needle will stay sharp. The artist should also wear latex gloves.

If you have to boil your equipment, do so for 15 minutes, with bleach if you have it. The best system I have found is to make everything brand new each time and boil it, and afterwards clean it with alcohol and let the person who got the work done keep the works. By making the customer responsible for their own personal works, they can get more work done later (if the piece isn’t finished yet) and be positive that no one else has used them.

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SAFE DISPOSAL

After you've finished a tattoo, you have medical waste. After the job is done, everything you used is waste and should be treated as such. The needle, tube or shaft that the needle goes in, the ink, the ink cap, the gloves, and the new towel that you had at the start which is now black, should be disposed of. **Don't ever re-use any of the stuff.** You can't take it to health care, so you have to throw it in the garbage.

Make sure you cut the point off the needle and bend it up before you throw it or flush it. This will make sure the garbage person or whoever won't accidentally get stuck by it. This way you know for sure that you're not spreading any diseases. The gloves and rags should also be tossed or flushed and never reused.

**BLEACH DOES NOT KILL HEP C**

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TATTOOING & YOU:

*the safeguards within prison*

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**TATTOOING & YOU**

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