

Points to consider
before having a

Tattoo

*Vintage
Flora*

A vibrant, stylized illustration of a bouquet of flowers, including roses and lilies, in shades of pink, red, and yellow, set against a dark background. The flowers are rendered in a bold, graphic style with thick outlines and a rich color palette. The composition is dense and layered, with various floral elements overlapping each other. The overall aesthetic is reminiscent of vintage floral patterns and modern graphic design.

What is a tattoo?

A tattoo involves penetrating the skin to place a pigment/dye into the second layer of the skin known as the dermis. This dye enters the skin using the vibrating needles on an electric tattoo machine. A good and experienced tattooist will know how deep to place the needle into the skin. If it is too shallow you will have a poor quality tattoo and if it is too deep you will experience bleeding and intense pain.

By piercing the skin there is potential to introduce infection into the body particularly if hygiene standards are not followed. Many beauty salons also offer micro-pigmentation which is a semi-permanent tattoo which is claimed to last for a short period and fade out gradually. However, in some instances the tattoo never fades or does so in an irregular fashion leaving behind patches of the tattoo which are often permanent.

Are there any age limits?

In the UK it is a criminal offence to tattoo any person under the age of 18. The tattooist would still be committing a criminal offence if they were to tattoo someone under the age of 18 even with parental consent. The Tattooist should always ask for appropriate photo ID such as a driving licence/passport if there is any doubt about age.



What are the risks?

Inappropriate hygiene standards can mean that if equipment is not appropriately sterilised there is a risk of contracting blood borne viral infections such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. Bacteria can be introduced under the skin which may cause infection and abscesses and in some instances may lead to blood poisoning which can be fatal. There is also a possibility of permanent scarring following infection. You may experience an allergic reaction to the tattoo dyes, skin cleaning agents or aftercare products.

Does it hurt?

As your skin will be repeatedly punctured to insert the dye to create your design, you will inevitably experience pain. However, the level of pain that you will experience will depend on a number of factors: your pain threshold, where you have your tattoo and how good your tattooist is. Your tattooist should not use topical local anaesthetic's to numb the area as these can damage the skin and you may have an allergic reaction. Local anaesthetic injections can only be given by a registered doctor or nurse.

Where should I go to have a tattoo?

Ensure that you go to a tattooist that is Registered with the Local Authority. There must be a Registration Certificate for each person that tattoos at the premise and this must be displayed in the studio. If you are unsure if the tattooist is registered then you may check the local authority website for an official list:
www.merthyr.gov.uk.

What should I look out for at the studio?

The tattooist should explain the procedure to you and keep a record of your name, address, type of tattoo and its location. The Tattooist should also go through a pre-consultation questionnaire to establish if you have any pre-existing health conditions for example if you are pregnant, diabetic, epileptic, a heart condition, high blood pressure, haemophilia, skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis or suffer with allergies as these may lead to complications either at the time of the tattoo or during the healing process. If you have a history of relevant medical conditions your tattooist should advise that you see your GP before continuing.

The tattoo studio must be clean with washable hard surfaces. The tattooist should wash their hands before starting, use a new pair of disposable gloves and have a clean and tidy appearance. There must be no smoking. Dyes should be decanted into little pots and then disposed of. The Tattooist should not be dipping into large containers of dye that will be used on other clients.

The tattooist may need to shave the area to be tattooed and a single use razor should be used and disposed of in a sharps box (yellow plastic container) when finished. Tattooists now commonly use single use sterile needles in individual packages and these should be opened in your presence and disposed of in a sharps box when finished.

The equipment leading down from the tattoo gun to the needles may be single use and disposable. These are generally made of plastic and are bought in individual sterile packs. Where the Tattooist uses reusable equipment, these are usually made of metal and will need to be sterilised by the tattooist. To sterilise the equipment the Tattooist will have an autoclave which will sterilise reusable equipment using heat and high pressure. If you have any concerns ask about the equipment and how it is sterilised.

Once you have had your tattoo it should be covered with a dressing before you leave the studio. Tattooists often use cling film and this should be left in place for at least 1 hour. Your tattooist should advise you on how to look after your new tattoo when you get home to include how to clean the area; what creams to apply; not to rub, touch or pick your tattoo; and to avoid some activities such as swimming, sun beds and dirty environments to ensure that it heals quickly and safely. It will typically take 4 to 5 weeks for the skin to heal completely.

This advice should be written down so that you can take it home with you. If you have any worries about your tattoo, your tattooist should be able to answer your queries. If there is any sign of an adverse reaction or infection you should visit your GP.



What if I change my mind?

If you do change your mind there are various tattoo removal procedures available but it can cost hundreds of pounds to remove even a relatively cheap tattoo. The removal procedures are painful and there is always a chance that they may be unsuccessful. Scarring is common and there is often a difference in skin colour between your normal skin and the formerly tattooed area. Remember, a tattoo is designed to be permanent and to remain with you for the rest of your life. It is a big decision, so make sure you have thought it through carefully!

Further advice or information?

If you have any concerns regarding a tattooist in the area then you may contact:

Merthyr Tydfil
County Borough Council
Public Health Department
01685 725138/725410

