

December 4, 2015

Dear Students, Parents and Staff of High Schools located in Alberta Health Services, Central Zone:

SUBJECT: DISEASE RISK FROM UNCONFIRMED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TATTOOING AND PIERCING OPERATIONS

Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Environmental Public Health Inspectors and Public Health Nurses have been made aware that there may be some high school students giving tattoos and piercings to other students.

Tattooing and piercings can pose a real risk for the spread of blood-borne infections such as hepatitis C, hepatitis B and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) if measures to prevent infection are not taken. For example, needles, ink and jewelry must be sterile, and any reusable equipment cleaned and disinfected to specific standards. Regulations require persons providing piercings and tattoos to take such measures. While Environmental Public Health Inspectors routinely inspect tattoo and piercing operators, this has not been done for any high school student operators.

Any student giving tattoos or piercings to others must stop doing this immediately.

Please contact Health Link Alberta (811) if a student has received a piercing or tattoo from another student. Information provided to Health Link is confidential and will not be used to punish students, but may be used to contact students who have been pierced or tattooed by other students. Students may be recommended to have a blood test to check for infection. In the rare situation where infection is found, early treatment may be useful, and education can reduce the risk of spread to others.

Receiving a piercing or tattoo from an operator who has not had an inspection from Alberta Health Services is not recommended. Safety information for persons considering piercing and tattooing is available online:

- <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwId=tv7075>
- <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/news/advisories/ne-pha-think-before-you-ink.pdf>

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Digby Horne, MD
Medical Officer of Health
Alberta Health Services, Central Zone