

# New Research Reveals What's in Tattoo Ink

*Angie Seelal, PA-C, with Advanced Dermatology P.C. breaks down what it all means*

WEST ISLIP, NY, UNITED STATES, October 11, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Whether it's part of someone's cultural heritage dating back thousands of years or just the result of a fun night out with friends, there's a growing number of people with tattoos around the globe. In the United States, as many as 3 in 10 adults have a [tattoo](#). That's all well and good, but [Angie Seelal](#), PA-C, with Advanced Dermatology P.C. wants people to know that tattoos aren't completely risk free.

"There's no need to panic, but for people thinking about getting a tattoo—even if it's not their first—it's important to be well informed," said Seelal.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers tattoo ink to be a cosmetic. This also includes the inks used in permanent makeup, henna, and other temporary tattoos.

While the FDA does have the authority to regulate these products, they generally don't unless there are specific reports of adverse reactions linked to a particular product.

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This is what led researchers to examine nearly 100 tattoo inks to determine what was in them. While this work isn't peer reviewed yet, the researchers were able to present their findings last week at the fall meeting of the American Chemical Society, and the results were surprising. (<https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/pressroom/newsreleases/2022/august/exposing-whats-in-tattoo-ink.html>)

Not only are there no companies that make pigments

specifically for tattoo ink, but many of the inks didn't even have an ingredient label. And those that did were not necessarily accurate.

Some inks contained azo pigments, and others had very small particles (less than 100 nm across). While more research is needed, it's possible that both of these findings could pose long-term health risks.

In fact, in January of this year the European Union banned the use of two common pigments in tattoo ink—Blue 15:3 and Green 7—citing safety concerns. These pigments are still available for use in the United States.

"When someone gets a tattoo, the ink moves past the topmost layer of skin—the epidermis—and gets trapped in the dermis, which is the next layer down. A lot of times this heals just fine, but sometimes it can lead to irritated skin or an infection. Some people even have an allergic reaction to either the pigments or the liquid that the pigments are embedded in," said Seelal.

Red and yellow inks have been reported to lead to the most allergic reactions, but research on the topic is scarce.

"None of this is to say that tattoos are necessarily bad," Seelal said, "but it highlights the importance of choosing a tattoo artist who's really a professional, not just in an artistic sense, but from a health and safety perspective too."

For people who don't have a tattoo artist picked out yet, a trusted family member or friend might be able to make a recommendation based on their own experience.

Tattoo artists aren't federally licensed, but local or state governments usually do have health and safety requirements for tattoo facilities. A reputable tattoo shop will have certifications and licenses on display to show that they're in compliance with local health codes. Artists should be using fresh gloves and individually wrapped packets of gauze. Even just walking in the front door, it should be clear right away that the shop is organized and sanitary.

"You can think of tattoo facilities in almost the same way you'd think about a restaurant," said Seelal. "If it's not clean enough that you would eat there, it's not clean enough to get a tattoo there either."

An experienced tattoo artist is also usually willing to set expectations in advance for appropriate healing practices and symptoms to watch out for. Some initial redness, soreness, or swelling is normal. But if the pain gets worse instead of better, or if you experience a fever, chills, or notice open sores, it's time to visit a doctor.

Another thing to consider before getting a tattoo? Talking to a dermatologist.

“A dermatologist can take into account different skin types and individual histories and provide advice, not only about future tattoos, but how to properly care for new tattoos as well,” said Seelal.

Post-tattoo care can include the use of lotions or creams and protection from UV sources such as the sun and tanning beds.

And of course, while tattoos can oftentimes be removed by a dermatologist using laser treatments, it’s not something that should be relied on. Laser tattoo removal can take more than a dozen treatments, and it can sometimes lead to scarring, lighter or darker patches of skin, and even pigment darkening.

“Take care in thinking about your tattoo,” Seelal suggested. “Get something meaningful that you plan to have forever.”

Bio: Angie Seelal, PA-C is a Certified Physician Assistant through the National Commission of Certification of Physician Assistants.

Advanced Dermatology P.C. and the Center for Laser and Cosmetic Surgery has over 50 offices in NY, NJ, CT and PA and is one of the leading dermatology centers in the nation, offering highly experienced physicians in the fields of cosmetic and laser dermatology, as well as plastic surgery and state-of-the-art medical technologies. [www.advanceddermatologypc.com](http://www.advanceddermatologypc.com)

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