

# Tattoo's: Understanding the Health Risks

Prepared by

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to increase awareness as part of a Service Project  
with the local Health Department

# Tattoo

- Tattoos have been around for over 6000 years
- Some authors report up to 23% of college students have tattoos
  - Mayers, LB et al. Mayo Clin Proc 2002;77:29-34.
- Many people who get a tattoo will eventually want to get rid of it.
  - Getting rid of it can be quite complicated
- There are medical risks of receiving a tattoo as well. This presentation will discuss some of those risks.

# What is a Tattoo

- An abrasion, scratching of the skin that allows ink to settle under the skin, executed by needles rapidly puncturing the skin.

Pictures of the instrument with the needles at the end

Needles



- There are multiple needles on the end that vibrate up and down causing the tearing of the skin and the ability for the ink to penetrate and stay within the skin.

# Disease Transmittance Concerns

- These tiny scratches in the skin makes places for diseases to enter
- Some diseases are transmitted from tiny microscopic particles left over on the equipment from a previous patient
  - Equipment should be sterilized and unwrapped in front of the patient
  - Needles should be new and opened in front of the patient
- Some diseases are transmitted from bacteria that is normally on the top of the skin but gets under the skin through the scratches
  - Keeping the area clean after the procedure is very important

# Possible diseases received from a tattoo or body piercing

- Hepatitis B & C
- Syphilis
- HIV
- Bacterial infections
  
- Leprosy

# Hepatitis B

Symptoms occur in 50% of all cases 60 to 120 days after infected

- Jaundice
- Flu like symptoms
- Fever, headache
- Skin rash, or itching
- Pain in the upper right abdomen
- Dark colored urine or light colored bowels

## Treatment

- Daily medicine for about 6 months
- Treatment may induce remission of virus activity

## Testing

- Blood test can confirm

## Prevention

- A series of 3 vaccinations received over 6 months before exposure

# Hepatitis C

## Symptoms occurring after years from exposure

- jaundice
  - Fatigue
  - Abdominal pain
  - Loss of appetite
  - Vomiting.
- 
- Increases risk for cancer of the Liver

## Treatment

- Daily oral meds for 6 to 12 months
- Treatment may induce remission of virus activity

## Testing

- Blood test

# Links of Hepatitis B and C

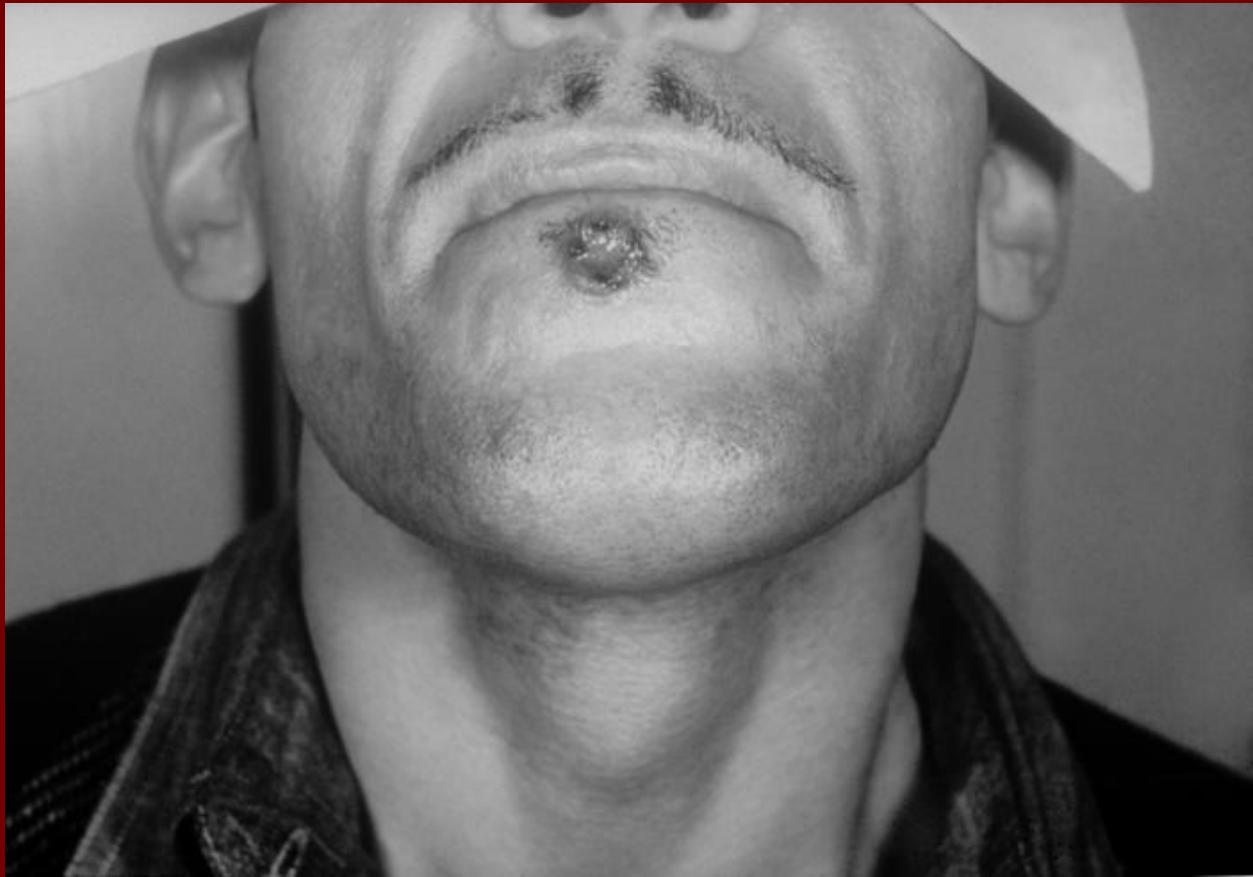
- Both are more common when using yellow, white, orange, or red inks.
- Both cause cirrhosis of the liver and or liver cancer

# Syphilis

- Symptoms occur in stages (primary, secondary, and tertiary)
- Latency period occurs in between secondary and tertiary. At this time no symptoms are present.
- Simple treatment of penicillin if detected early
- If it is not treated, syphilis can lead to brain, nerve, and tissue damage that cannot be repaired.

# Syphilis primary symptoms

- chancre, last 1 to 5 weeks, found on, inside or around genitals



# Syphilis secondary symptoms

Secondary ( happen 17 days to 6 1/2 months after infected)  
Last 2 to 5 wks

- Includes: A rough, reddish-brown rash that appears on the palms of your hands or the soles of your feet, which normally does not itch.
- Rashes on other parts of the body, including the neck, head and torso.
- Condylomata lata or syphilitic "warts", moist, raised or elevated skin lesions, may be found in the anus or genital area.
- "Mucous patches," flat, round, grayish-white sores, can appear on the mouth, throat, and cervix.
- Patchy loss of hair on the head and other parts of the body. A general sense of ill health.

# Syphilis Tertiary Symptoms

- Symptoms of late stage or tertiary syphilis can occur 2 to 30+ years after infection.
- Complications during this stage can include:
- Gummas: Small bumps or tumors that can develop on the skin, bones, liver or any other organ.
- Problems with heart and blood vessels
- Chronic nervous system disorders, such as blindness, insanity and paralysis
- At this stage only the Gummas can be reversed all other damage is irreversible

# HIV

## (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

- Transmitted by body fluids
  - Including from contaminated equipment
- Often without any symptoms

### **Treatment**

- Medications can decrease viral activity

### **Testing**

- Blood test
- Testing can take up to 6 months to turn positive

# Staph infection of the epidermis

- Bacteria infection that if not treated seriously can spread and cause multiple problems throughout the body



# Leprosy

- **Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease which attacks the skin, peripheral nerves and mucous membranes (eyes, respiratory tract). Treatment drugs duration of treatment 6months with daily meds**
- **Note, most cases corresponding with piercings and tattoos are not reported in the United States.**

# Leprosy

## Symptoms

- Leprosy is characterized by multiple lesions accompanied by sensory loss in the affected areas. Usually, sensory loss begins in the extremities (toes, fingertips). In many advanced cases, gangrene sets in, causing parts of the body to "die" (necrosis) and become deformed.

## Treatment

- drugs duration of treatment 6months with daily meds

# Why awareness is important?

- Better chance of decreasing the damage, by quick action.
- Better chance of making sure that the instruments are sterile, less chance for contamination
- Health care gives less evasive care with more precautions.

# Bibliography

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