

Blood donation still safe for those with tattoos

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The weather is finally starting to warm up, and people are breaking out the shorts, bathing suits and flip-flops.

And with the showing of more skin comes the unveiling of previously hidden tattoos—an estimated 36 percent of Americans under the age of 30 have them—which might lead to others getting the body art itch.

Experts at Hoxworth [Blood](#) Center want to remind you that summertime is when blood donors are the hardest to recruit and that just because you decide to express yourself with a new tattoo doesn't mean you can't save lives through [blood donation](#).

"Many people think that once you have a tattoo, you can no longer donate blood at all or that you have to wait for at least a year afterward," says Ronald Sacher, MD, director of Hoxworth Blood Center and a professor of medicine at the University of Cincinnati. "The 12-month rule applies in some unregulated states, but for the most part, this is not relevant in the Tristate.

"If the tattoo was administered in a licensed facility in Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky, a person can donate as soon as any scarring heals; the same goes for piercings."

Sacher says it is important that tattoos and piercings are done in a sterile, licensed environment.

"Research has shown that there is an association between having one or more tattoos and having hepatitis C," he says. "However, licensed facilities ensure that the instruments used are sterilized and that artists use gloves and wash their hands between clients."

At Hoxworth, a questionnaire is given to all donors prior to donation to determine eligibility. Questions will include sexual history and current health status as well as whether or not a donor has a tattoo or piercing.

"All blood that is donated is screened for diseases such as HIV, hepatitis, syphilis and other common blood-borne illnesses," Sacher says.

"However, we ask the initial screening questions to ensure that we aren't collecting unsafe blood products. There is still always a chance of unknowingly carrying a disease."

Sacher says that although Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana regulate tattoo shops, it never hurts to ask before taking the plunge.

He adds that Hoxworth welcomes all eligible donors, including those with tattoos.

"A lot has changed since tattoos started becoming mainstream," he says.

"But now, there are ways to have body art done and still be passionate in your commitment to helping others. During the summer months, our blood supplies are at the lowest levels. If you can brave the tattoo needle, please brave our needles to give blood and save lives."

If a tattoo was not received at a licensed facility in the Tristate, people with a [tattoo](#), permanent makeup or piercing can donate one year following the body art.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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