

# Tattoo ink found to be source of *M. chelonae* outbreak

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(HealthDay)—Premixed tattoo ink has been found to be the source of an outbreak of *Mycobacterium chelonae* in 19 patients in Rochester, N.Y., according to a study published online Aug. 22 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Byron S. Kennedy, M.D., Ph.D., from the Monroe County Department of Public Health in Rochester, N.Y., and colleagues analyzed data from patient interviews and conducted histopathological testing of skin-biopsy specimens with acid-fast bacilli smears and microbial cultures. DNA sequencing was performed as well as cultures of the ink and ingredients used in the preparation and packaging of ink. Tattoo parlor water and faucets were also assessed.

The researchers found that a persistent, raised erythematous rash developed in the tattoo area of 19 people (13 men and six women; average age, 35 years) within three weeks of receiving a tattoo from a single artist who used premixed gray ink. Abnormalities in skin-biopsy specimens were present in all 17 patients biopsied. *Mycobacterium chelonae* was found in 14 patients and confirmed with DNA sequencing. With appropriate [antibiotics](#), the condition improved in 18 of the 19 patients.

"The premixed ink was the common source of infection in this [outbreak](#)," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract](#)

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