

# AAD: Complications of tattoos and tattoo ink discussed

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(HealthDay)—Complications linked to tattoos and tattoo inks include allergic reactions, serious infections, and reactions that can be mistaken for skin cancer, according to information presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology, held from March 1 to 5 in Miami Beach.

Noting that the composition of tattoo ink has changed over the years, Michi Shinohara, M.D., from the University of Washington in Seattle, and colleagues discussed the possible complications linked to ink used in newer tattoos, many of which contain organic azo dyes with plastic-

based pigments.

The researchers report that [allergic reactions](#) are among the most common problems associated with tattooing. These can include itching, bumps, and rashes that occur days, months, or years after the initial tattoo, and need to be treated with topical steroids. [Skin cancer](#) can occur within a tattoo and consequently tattoos should never be placed over an existing mole. Bumps sometimes arise within the tattoo that look like [squamous cell carcinoma](#), and may require a biopsy and possibly surgery. Common infections linked to tattooing and contaminated tattoo ink include localized bacterial infections, syphilis, and [hepatitis B](#) and C, resulting from non-sterile tattooing practices.

"Since tattoos are not regulated in any way, there are many unknowns that could pose potential problems for consumers in terms of the inks and tools used," Shinohara said in a statement. "It is especially important for consumers to be aware of the potential risks, report any problem that develops to the tattoo artist, and see a board-certified [dermatologist](#) for proper diagnosis and treatment."

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