

# When your teen wants a tattoo

November 7 2019, by Len Canter

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"Mom, can I get a tattoo?" Tats, along with body piercings, have become mainstream.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration reports that 29% of the population has at least one tattoo. So this is a question you're likely to face as a parent. You may not be in favor of it, but it's important to know what steps to take, especially if your child is insistent.

First, find out the local regulations regarding the legality of people under 18 getting a tattoo. Some states prohibit it while others require a parent's permission and their presence during the inking.

Next, have an open-minded discussion with your [teen](#), including the possible risks, such as an allergic reaction to the inks, infection and even scarring. Many of these stem from needle reuse, tools that haven't been properly sanitized and contaminated inks.

Mention the potential long-term consequences. Because a teen's body is still growing, a tattoo inked at age 16 could become stretched out of shape and faded by their 20s. To some employers, a visible tattoo makes for a less attractive job candidate. Tattoos are very hard to remove if there is a change of mind. Even if successful, laser procedures are expensive.

If the decision is made to go ahead, check your local health department to see if the [tattoo](#) parlor your teen is considering is properly licensed and that the artist has significant training and experience. Your teen should be up to date with immunizations, especially hepatitis B and tetanus.

Afterward, watch for signs of a bad reaction, including fever, prolonged bleeding, tenderness and redness or any color change to the skin around the area. Call your [health care provider](#) right away if any develop.

**More information:** The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on [tattooing](#) and what parents need to know.

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Citation: When your teen wants a tattoo (2019, November 7) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-11-teen-tattoo.html>

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