



Frequently Asked Questions

Tattooing and Piercing Establishments

Q. Is a license required for tattooing, cosmetic tattooing, microblading, body piercing, or ear piercing in Montana?

A. Yes, a license has been required since 2007, (Title 50, Chapter 48, subchapter 1 MCA and ARM Title 37, Chapter 112, subchapter 1).

Q. If I tattoo or pierce for no charge, do I still need a license?

A. Yes, offering the services of tattooing, cosmetic tattooing, microblading, body piercing or ear piercing on any person, other than yourself, requires a license in Montana.

Q. Why is licensing for ear lobe piercing different from ear cartilage piercing?

A. Most complications reported in ear piercings have been located in the cartilage, not lobes. Infections from upper ear cartilage piercings can be very difficult to treat because cartilage does not have its own blood supply and antibiotics cannot travel to the infection site.

Q. If I have a tattooing license, can I remove tattoos?

A. No, the Montana Board of Medical Examiners has determined tattoo removal is the practice of medicine. Unless you also have the required license from the Montana Board of Medical Examiners, you cannot remove tattoos.

Q. Once I have my license for tattooing or piercing, can I tattoo or pierce at a client's home? What about another business or an event?

A. No, a license is specific to the location. Tattooing and piercing is not allowed in clients' homes where conditions of sanitation can vary greatly.

Guest artists may operate at a licensed establishment as long as they are up-to-date on all required training and the Health Department is notified. If the artist is not local and the Health Department doesn't have copies of current training certificates or a photo ID, copies of those will need to be provided. If you travel out of Cascade County and plan on being a guest artist at a licensed establishment, contact the local jurisdiction for additional local requirements (e.g., Billings licenses individual artists).

A separate license is required when tattooing or piercing at a temporary event, such as a concert, rally, or fair.

Q. If my mobile unit is licensed, can I tattoo or pierce anywhere in Montana?

A. Yes, a licensed mobile unit may be used in any county in Montana, whether it was licensed by Yellowstone County, Gallatin County, or Montana DPHHS. If the mobile unit is not used, then an additional temporary event license is required. Contact the local jurisdiction for information on additional requirements their county may have (e.g., Billings licenses individual artists).

Q. Where can I get the required training for General Sanitation, First Aid and Bloodborne Pathogens?

A. General Sanitation covers the rules and definitions contained within the Tattooing and Piercing ARM and can be found online at <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/FCSS/BodyArt>. The General Sanitation quiz can be taken online at the above website or in person at the Health Department any time during regular business hours. First Aid and Bloodborne Pathogen training can be obtained by attending a class or through online training courses. Bloodborne Pathogen training should meet the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1030).

Q. Do I need to renew my training certifications?

A. Yes. Bloodborne Pathogens must be taken annually, as required by OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1030. The General Sanitation quiz must also be completed annually. First Aid is typically renewed every 2 years, depending on the certificate course.

Q. What are the Montana requirements for sterilization?

A. Tattooing and piercing establishments are required to use autoclave sterilization for all items that come into contact with the client. Establishments may also use prepackaged sterile disposable items and prepackaged sterile jewelry. Montana rule requires that the package be opened in view of the client.

Q. How do I know if my tattoo ink is safe?

A. Although a number of color additives are approved for use in cosmetics by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), none are approved for injection into the skin. Inks are also not required to be sterilized by the manufacturer. To help ensure your inks are safe, purchase your inks from a reputable supplier, use inks specifically designed for tattooing, and be diligent in preventing contamination. Do not use inks that are under FDA Recall, as they are not safe for use. The FDA does not regulate tattoo facilities; however, they do monitor problems associated with tattoo inks and alert the public when there are products that may cause illness or injury. For information on cosmetics, tattoo inks or recalls, go to <https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics>. To report an adverse reaction or potential safety issue associated with an ink, go to <https://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetics-compliance-enforcement>.

Q. Are there any types of body art that are not allowed?

A. Yes. Some techniques of body art have a higher chance of disease or injury and are not allowed. Some examples are branding, scarification, implants (except microdermal anchors), tongue splitting, dental modification and ear shaping. For more information, refer to ARM, Title 37, Chapter 112, subchapter 165.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. For a copy of the rules, plan review application or other materials, contact the following:

CITY COUNTY HEALTH DEPT—ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
115 4TH ST S
GREAT FALLS, MT 59401
406-761-9883 or 406-454-6950