



9 Surprising Things You Don't Realize Are Going To Ruin Your Tattoo

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Getting a tattoo is exciting, especially if it's something that you've wanted for a long time. Like any big decision, however, there are things you need to know and consider before getting that ink permanently embedded on your skin. You've done your homework — you've considered what design you want, where you want it, and how it's going to affect your body — but there are also some surprising things you don't realize are going to ruin your tattoo if you don't address them right away or take steps to prevent them from happening in the first place.

The last thing you want, after you invest time, money, and maybe just a little bit of momentary pain into getting a new tattoo, is for that tattoo to become altered or infected in any way. If you don't take care of it correctly, there can be some disastrous results. Immediately after you get your tattoo, it's basically the same as caring for an open wound, which may surprise some people.

"You're taking a needle and going through the top layer of skin into the dermis and injecting the ink, and they're doing that thousands of times, so it is a traumatic process to the skin," Dr. Terrence Keaney, Dove Men+ Care expert dermatologist and founder of SkinDC, tells Romper in an interview. If you don't apply a product to allow those tiny holes in your skin to heal without any interference from bacteria and other infection-causing agents, you could end up with a secondary infection. Keaney says that while people often think that unclean needles cause infections after tattoos, it's often actually because of incorrect care.

Keep your tattoo clean and covered while it's healing and then keep your eye out for these other things that you might not realize could ruin that beautiful tattoo.

1 Ink Allergy



You may not know if you're allergic to a tattoo ink — or if your body will have a major immune response to the pigments — until after you get your tattoo, but you should definitely watch for warning signs.

"[C]admium, which makes yellow color, is the number one tattoo allergen," dermatologist Dr. Bobby Buka tells Romper. If you're really worried about a possible allergy, consider avoiding yellow ink if it's not absolutely necessary.

2 Sun Exposure



According to Buka, ultraviolet light can penetrate down to the layers of skin where your tattoo pigment resides, having an unwanted effect on the tattoo. Ultraviolet light can cause your tattoo to fade faster, Buka says, so he recommends lathering on a sunscreen containing zinc or titanium whenever your tattoo will be exposed to sunshine.

3 Aging And Other Body Changes



Your skin changes, as you age as well as if you gain or lose weight. Depending on where you decide to get your tattoo, that could have major implications. "Some of the best locations are ones which are on areas of the skin which tend to be sun protected and not as susceptible to weight change such as the mid lower back, back of the neck, chest, and inner upper arm," dermatologist **Dr. Jeffrey Fromowitz** tells Romper by email. You've likely already thought long and hard about the location of your tattoo, but you may not have thought about it from this perspective before.

4 Lack Of Skin Hydration



Your skin has to stay well-hydrated if you want your tattoo to look its best. Buka recommends ceramide-based moisturizers, which can penetrate layers of skin to reach the pigment. "They help replenish the dermis, mostly by sustaining the integrity of a fiber called elastin fibers," Buka says. "Elastin fibers are responsible for the snap of our skin, but they'll also keep tattoo pigments in place and prevent them from migrating into the surrounding tissue." After all, you don't want your hard-fought tattoo to blur.

5 Smoking



Most people know that smoking can potentially negatively affect your skin, but did you know that it can wreak havoc on your tattoo? "If you're a smoker, it lowers fibroblast activity so your fibroblasts can't make collagen," Buka says. "It can't keep that tissue healthy, if it can't keep that tissue healthy, that tattoo pigment's going to bleed out."

6 Picking At Scabs



When scabs form or your skin starts to peel, it can be difficult to just leave it alone, but in the case of a tattoo, you definitely don't want to touch it. "Picking or peeling at the scabs increases the risks of infection as well as scarring and can change the healed appearance of the tattoo," **Fromowitz** says. Cover it until the scab falls off if you have to, because it's not worth ruining your tattoo over.

7 Submergence In Water



If you spend your summers frolicking in the ocean, you may not want to go get your new tattoo until fall comes. "It is OK to get the tattoo wet, but avoid prolonged submersion in water for a few weeks," **Fromowitz** says. "You especially do not want to go into the ocean, a pool, or Jacuzzi while the tattoo and skin are healing." It can introduce bacteria to your still-healing tattoo and cause a potentially dangerous infection.

8 Not Following Your Licensed Tattoo Artist's Instructions



Listen to your tattoo artist, because they know what they're talking about. "Healing trends to be the most annoying part about it all and I know everyone has their own special way of healing," tattoo artist Johnny Vampotna tells Romper by email. He continues:

"I've heard 'let a wolf or dog lick it,' 'keep it wrapped for seven days in food wrap,' 'scrub aggressively for a week with a loofah,' because they've heard it from their uncle that got tattooed in Hong Kong back in 1968 or something wacky like that, but please just

listen to your licensed tattoo artist (whom I assume you've done your due diligence beforehand & you trust her/him) it really might save that leg of yours & maybe in some extreme cases even your life."

Want to avoid a severe infection or just keep that tattoo beautiful? Listen to what they advise.

9 Over-Cleansing



Cleansing your skin is really important, but just as important (if not more) is how you're cleansing. "When we cleanse, we're removing the dirt and oil from the skin's surface, but if you over-cleanse, you dry the skin out, when you dry the skin out actually means the barrier is not as protected as well and you can get irritation," Keaney says. Treat your tattoo gently and mindfully and you'll hopefully avoid premature fading, blurring, or any adverse reactions.