



Health Guidelines for Tattooing



Ministry of Health

2017



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

*Edited by:
Leausa Toleafoa Dr. Take Naseri
And
Robert M. Carney*

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	3
What is the Samoan Tatau (Tattoo)?	4
What is this handbook for?.....	4
What infections can occur from a Samoan tattoo?	5
Your Risk.....	7
How can you prevent infection as a Client?	7
1. Before getting any type of tattoo	7
Preparation for Samoan Traditional Tattoo (sogaimiti or malu)	8
2. Choosing a tufuga	8
2. During the tattooing process	9
3. Healing and aftercare.....	10
Healthy Diet for Healthy Tattoo Healing.....	10
How can you prevent infection as a Tufuga?.....	11
1. Before beginning a tattooing session.....	11
2. Hand washing.....	12
3. Gloves (Personal Protective Equipment for the hands).....	12
4. Sterilisation	13
Sterilisation with an autoclave.....	13
Sterilisation with chemical sterilizer	13
5. Hygienic procedures during the tattooing process.....	14
6. Maintain clean tattooing premises.....	16
7. Proper disposal of waste.....	16
8. Client register.....	17
9. Resources for Tufuga	17



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

Foreword

Leausa Toleafoa Dr. Take Naseri
Director General of the Ministry of Health



It is with a great sense of fulfilment that I present the Health Guidelines for Tattooing from the Ministry of Health. Tattooing has been a treasured part of Samoan culture for thousands of years. The art form is one of the many things that distinguish Samoa culturally from the rest of the world. An essential way of honouring this tradition is ensuring the safety of the tattooing process and the protecting the health of all tufuga (tattooists) and those receiving tattoos.

This handbook is designed as easy-to-read reference for all the information that people getting tattoos and tattooists themselves need to know about making sure the process is healthy and safe. “Health Guidelines for Tattooing” is the first handbook of its kind and marks the beginning of the Ministry of Health’s efforts to build a partnership with the tattooist community in Samoa in order to create an alliance for infection control and promoting public health.

The contents of this handbook include 1) basic information on the tattooing process for both modern and traditional methods, 2) health risks as they relate to tattooing, 3) guidelines to prevent health risks during the tattooing process, 4) and the Ministry of Health’s standard for healthy and safe tattooing.

We present this information in the hopes that it will assist both tattooists and clients in protecting their health while participating in this timeless and beloved form of art. Together we can honour our ancestors and protect the health of our people

Ma le fa’aaloalo lava.

Leausa Toleafoa Dr. Take Naseri
Director General/Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Ministry of Health
Apia, Samoa



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

What is the Samoan Tatau (Tattoo)?

The tatau tradition is thousands of years old. According to Samoan legends, the art was brought to Samoa by two women who swam from the Manu'a Islands from a village now called Fiti-uta. The word tattoo is thought to be derived from the Samoan word "tatau". Receiving a tatau (sogaimiti) for men and malu for women) is part of being bestowed a customary title within a village or community. The process takes many hours and involves puncturing the skin with instruments (pictured below) placing ink inside. This creates a design that covers most of the legs and parts of the torso for men and the upper legs for women. Increasingly, overseas clients seek traditional tatau methods for tattooing. However, many also get body art done with palagi tattoo machines. Modern tattooing is performed with an electric machine, a cluster of oscillating needles deposits liquid pigment into upper layer of the skin (much like traditional tattooing) and minor bleeding generally occurs. Both methods of tattooing are popular modern forms of self and cultural expression. Though all tattooing involves some risk of infection, the traditional methods of tattooing (where tools are re-used) have higher risk.

Samoa Traditional Tatau instruments



Modern Tattoo Machine



What is this handbook for?

This book is intended to provide important health information for all people involved in the tattoo process whether as a person receiving a tattoo, the tattooist, the tattooist's assistant, or a person handling tattoo equipment (either traditional or modern). This handbook is meant to communicate the highest possible standard for safe tattooing. The Ministry of Health recognises that not all situations will allow for these standards. In these cases, alternative methods are proposed.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

The guidelines contained within are designed to protect people from infection and control the spread of infection and diseases. Part of honouring the Tatau tradition is ensuring that all people are safe from infection during the process.

What infections can occur from a Samoan tattoo?

For all people getting a tattoo and even tattooists (tufuga), there is risk for getting an infection from the tattooing process. Any breakage of the skin's surface means there is a risk of infection for the client. Even small amounts of blood can transmit infection. Common bacteria and viruses can get in and may cause scarring or sickness. Because the tools traditionally used in customary tattoo procedures are non-disposable, it is impossible to completely eliminate the risk of blood-borne infections. Attention to cleanliness by tattooists/tufuga can significantly reduce the risks.

Tufuga are also at risk of infection as they are in constant contact with human blood, and may accidentally cut their own skin while performing a tattoo, or may be exposed to infection when handling contaminated linen or cleaning tools. Some viruses, like Hepatitis B, been found to survive for more than a week in dried blood. **This means that artists and clients can still be exposed to the virus long after an infected person has left the tattooing premises if counters, chairs, needles, or equipment are not properly disinfected.**

Needles and other sharp instruments that are used to penetrate the skin become contaminated by contact with blood. Blood may be infected with a variety of blood-borne viruses and/or bacteria. Viruses and common bacteria can be transmitted when contaminated instruments penetrate the skin. Even small amounts of infected blood can pass on infection. Bacteria and viruses that spread through blood include:

- Numerous types of bacteria and viruses that cause infections in the skin and other areas of the body
- Hepatitis B and C, which are viruses that can cause inflammation of the liver, long-term illness, liver damage and eventually cancer
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) – the virus that causes AIDS.

Viral infections

Viral infections do not necessarily produce symptoms or signs. For this reason, it is important that customary tattooists/tufuga encourage clients to have blood tests if they are worried or in the case of an accident involving blood occurs. Tattooists/tufuga themselves are encouraged to regularly undergo the necessary blood tests for viral illnesses, whether or not they display symptoms. In the case of HIV, a tattooist/tufuga should discuss precautions with their medical practitioner when appropriate.

Bacterial Infections

There are numerous types of bacteria that can cause infection in a healing tattoo. Infections left untreated can turn into sepsis (the presence of harmful bacteria in bodily tissues), septicaemia (the presence of harmful bacteria in the blood, or septic shock (dangerously low blood pressure due to damage from sepsis)). Staph infections, caused by the staphylococcus bacteria, are common in



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

Samoa. Bacterial infections require antibiotics to treat, though some infections are resistant to certain antibiotics.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus. It can cause long-term illness and can result in liver damage and also lead to cancer of the liver. There is no known cure for hepatitis C nor is there a preventive vaccine.

Hepatitis B

Symptoms of acute hepatitis B include tiredness, malaise, jaundice and an inflamed and often painful liver. The infection can also result in long-term illness, including liver damage and liver cancer. Hepatitis B can be transmitted by blood on instruments used for tattooing procedures and through poor hygiene. The Hepatitis B virus can live outside the human body for seven (7) days, which makes the risk for spreading the virus through unsterilized tattoo instruments a high risk.

A safe effective vaccine is available for hepatitis B: a course of three injections will provide full protection to most children and young adults (to whom the vaccine is most commonly given). A blood test will show whether a person is protected. In the interests of their own personal health and client safety, tattooists/tufuga, and clients should ensure they are vaccinated. Local hospital and doctors can provide this service.

HIV

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. Skin piercing poses the risk of contracting HIV. At present there is no vaccine against HIV/AIDS and no cure. Though the actual HIV being transmitted via a traditional tattooing is scientifically unknown, the Ministry of Health has recognized Samoan traditional tattooing methods as a serious potential threat to the spread of HIV. Safe and hygienic practices minimise the chance of transmission during tattooing.

MRSA

MRSA is an antibiotic-resistant bacterium that destroys tissues. It is seen in the tattoo infections, has been diagnosed in otherwise healthy athletes, military recruits and prison inmates. The skin infections can be transmitted from person to person by contact with draining sores, or through contact with contaminated items or surfaces. MRSA generally causes mild skin infections, but in some cases has led to pneumonia, bloodstream infections, and a painful, flesh-destroying condition called necrotizing fasciitis.

Tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis typically manifests as a cough last for three (3) weeks or longer. It is caused by bacteria and usually transmitted through the air by an infected person when they cough. However when ink is mixed with non-sterile water, TB bacteria can be passed into the water which in turn are placed under a person's skin causing a TB infection outside of the lungs (called extra pulmonary TB). Tuberculosis is difficult to treat taking 9 months to a year to cure with specific antibiotics.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

Tetanus

Tetanus is a bacterial infection that causes muscle spasms, fever and high blood pressure. Some muscle spasms may be so severe that it causes bone fractures. Tetanus is common in hot humid climates. It can be prevented with a series of vaccinations. In the interests of their own personal health and client safety, tattooists/tufuga and clients should ensure they are vaccinated. Local hospital and doctors can provide this service.

Your Risk

Clients are at risk of viral and bacterial infection as the tattooing process involves puncturing the skin. Artists are also at risk of puncturing their own skin during the set-up for a tattoo, the tattooing process itself, and the clean-up process. Risk of contracting viruses and bacteria from a single puncture from a sharp object varies.

Risk of getting HIV from a single after a needle stick or cut exposure to HIV-infected blood is 0.3% or 1 in 300. **HOWEVER, both modern and traditional tattooing processes involve hundreds or thousands of skin punctures by needles. Therefore the risk of infection is high if tattooing equipment is not cleaned and sterilized.**

How can you prevent infection as a Client?

1. Before getting any type of tattoo

Before getting a tattoo, it is in your best interest to be up to date on all vaccines at least 3 weeks prior to getting a tattoo. This is to ensure you are fully immunized against certain infections and that your immune system is at full strength by the time you get the tattoo. It is also important to note that vaccines do not prevent all infections. Talk to your family doctor first, especially if you are getting an extensive tattoo. Discuss any health conditions (for example, diabetes, hypertension, high blood pressure, heart disease, smoking and alcohol use) that could affect your ability to recover from the tattoo, and any other health worries you may have about the tattoo. Schedule a follow-up check up with the doctor to screen yourself for viruses and infection (HIV, Hepatitis B & C, etc.). Knowing your health status is the first step in protecting your health.

The following conditions in particular will make it difficult for your body to heal and pose additional health risks;

- Hypertension
- Heart Problems (such as Rheumatic Heart Disease)
- Diabetes
- Renal Problems (CRI)
- Bleeding Tendencies
- Medication taken (Aspirin, Blood Thinners)



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

- Morbid Obesity
- Viral – HBV,HCV,HIV
- Bacterial infections of Staph. or Typhoid
- Fungal Infestations
- Poor diet or poor nutrition

If you are pregnant, you should be aware that getting a tattoo involves the risk of infection that will directly affect the health of your unborn child. It is advised that you consult your doctor before getting any kind of tattoo (modern or traditional).

Your skin should be clean and intact before the tattooing process starts. Make sure you shower and wash the area to be tattooed with antibacterial soap.

Preparation for Samoan Traditional Tattoo (sogaimiti or malu)

Tattoos using traditional Samoan instruments take longer and are normally more painful than disposable needle tattoo machines. Therefore both physical and mental preparation for the tattooing process is strongly advised. In the case of men's traditional tattoo (sogaimiti), the process can take up to two weeks, for many hours each day, and cover between 60-70% of your body. This will cause significant stress to your body.

To prepare for this, you should;

1. Eat a healthy diet (practice good nutrition) and be well rested before the process begins. Drink only water, no soft drinks.
2. Stop consuming alcohol, cigarettes, or any drugs before the tattooing process, during, and for the duration that the tattoo is healing
3. Make sure that you have consulted your family, your faifeau (church minister), and your community to make sure they support your decision to get a sogaimiti or malu. You will need their support during the tattooing process and during the healing process.
4. Mentally prepare yourself to endure pain for many hours
5. Learn more about the process from the tattooist so you know what to expect

2. Choosing a tufuga

You should choose a tufuga or tattoo artist that you feel comfortable with and has the knowledge to address all of your concerns before the tattooing process.

It is your body so you have the right to ask the tufuga questions about what to expect and the safe hygiene procedures the tufuga will take to reduce the risk of infection. All tattoos involve some risk of infection, and traditional tatau has greater risks. But safe and hygienic practices reduce these risks.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

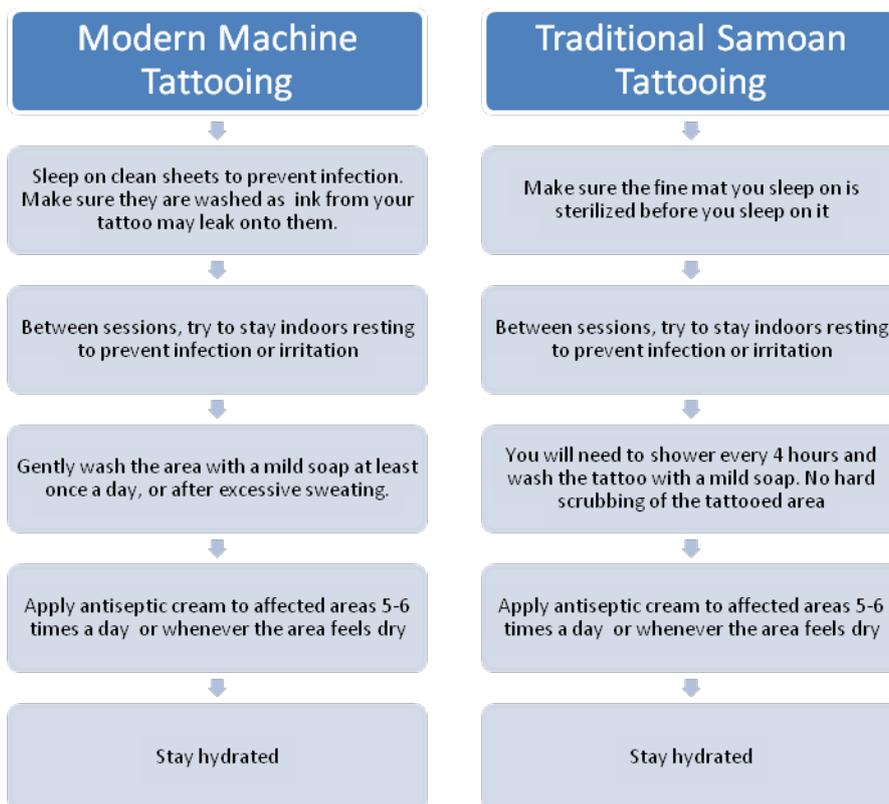
It is also in your best interest to visit a tufuga's tatau studio or premises of tattooing to make sure you feel comfortable with the sterilization and hygiene procedures that take place there. Ask the staff there about the steps they take to prevent infection.

2. During the tattooing process

For all types of tattoos, there is significant pain involved. It is important to expect and prepare for this. Tattoos done with disposable needle machines typically take less time than tattoos done with traditional instruments. However, if you are getting a tattoo that covers a large portion of your body, the process can take multiple hours and multiple tattooing sessions.

For long tattooing sessions that span multiple days, there are specific self-care processes;

During the tattooing process.....



As families are often part of the tattooing process in traditional tattooing, family members can support the person being tattooed by...

- Preparing healthy food for the person after tattooing sessions
- Providing moral support during the tattooing process
- Being healthy themselves



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

3. Healing and aftercare

Tattoos take time to heal, depending on the extent of the body that has been tattooed, the person's immune system, and if safe hygiene practices were observed. The minimum healing time is 2 weeks for the skin to fully close. However, the tattoo will still continue to heal underneath the skin at this time and can take up to one (1) month or longer.

The Tufuga will be able to give you advice on how to care for your tattoo during the healing process. The tufuga should also check up on you to watch for signs of infection. Immediately talk to your tufuga if you think you see signs of an infection. The tattooist should be able to identify if a tattoo is infected and send you to a doctor for care.

For smaller tattoos, upon completion of the tattooing process, the tufuga will bandage the tattoo after she/he washes it. The bandage is to be worn until you get home and then remove it that day so the tattoo can be aired and heal.

Typically, you gently and liberally apply an antiseptic cream or ointment for the first 2-4 days until the bleeding has stopped. Then you will switch to a Vitamin A & D ointment, or a moisturizer that is free of irritating perfumes and dyes, or virgin coconut oil. You can ask your tufuga for alternative products to use. You need to keep the skin moist so that the scabs are not disturbed until it is fully healed. The scabs ensure that the ink is locked into the skin and prevent infections from occurring.

It is important to also wash your tattoo once a day with a mild perfume and dye free soap. Apply soap gently to the tattooed area, without rubbing the soap in and disturbing the scabbing process. Additionally you should wash your tattoo after exercising, or after it is soiled by dirt or dust.

Do not scratch the tattoo (though it may feel itchy) as you will disrupt the healing process and risk infection. The itching is a sign that the tattoo is healing naturally.

Wear clean clothes to prevent infection.

For at least the first 2 weeks upon completion of your tattoo, avoid sunlight, swimming and submerging the tattoo in water for extended periods of time. If the tattooed skin has not yet closed or fully healed, continue to avoid sunlight and water. For tattoos done with traditional ink and tools, the traditional healing practice is that you should begin bathing in clean ocean water after 3-5 days of healing to prevent infection and speed up the healing process.

Light physical activity like walking is encouraged, however strenuous physical activity should be avoided.

You can also help the healing process by making sure that you have washed the sheets and blankets in the bed you sleep in so no dirt or bacteria are present. Clean sleeping area, means a clean tattoo. Avoid sleeping on the tattooed area if possible.

Healthy Diet for Healthy Tattoo Healing

Eating healthy to promote tattoo healing is vital. The importance of good nutrition in the healing of wounds and the promotion of health is widely acknowledged.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

During the healing process of a tattoo, your body needs more...

- **Protein** (found in eggs, lean meat [grilled or baked with little to no oil], and peanuts)
- **Healthy carbohydrates** (like taro and breadfruit [ulu])
- **Healthy fats** (like avocado and nuts)
- **Vitamin A** (found in laupele, spinach, kipasi saina [bok choy], and sweet potatoes), **Vitamin C** (found in esi or papaya), and **Vitamin K** (found in lettuce and cabbage)
- **Zinc** (found in breakfast cereals and red meat)

How can you prevent infection as a Tufuga?

1. Before beginning a tattooing session...

The following basic principles should be observed by tattooists/tufuga before the tattooing process begins in order to minimize infections and cross-contamination of tools:

- ☒ For traditional tatau tools, the Ministry of Health strongly recommends ONE set of tools should be used for ONE person at a time. In the instance of a ceremony where multiple people are getting tattooed, each person should have a separate set of tools for the tattooing process. In the case there is only one set of tools, all tools must be cleaned and sterilized before being used on a different person to prevent the transmission of infections.
- ☒ For palagi tattoo machines with single use disposable needles, one needle should be used on one person then safely disposed of.
- ☒ All tattooists should be in good health before tattooing to protect themselves and clients.
- ☒ All tattooists must have access to a clean water supply for cleaning and sterilization.
- ☒ Equipment must be thoroughly cleaned and sterilized each time a different person is to be tattooed. Any equipment penetrating the skin must be sterile.
- ☒ Used and clean tools must not come in contact with one another when storing them.
- ☒ Clean tools are to be placed on clean, sterilized surfaces.
- ☒ Dirty linen, dressings, spatulas and disposable gloves are to be thrown away immediately and appropriately.
- ☒ Materials that people being tattooed come in contact with are clean and handled and used hygienically.
- ☒ The tattooist/tufuga observes personal hygiene standards at all times (for example, hand washing). Tattooists/tufuga must keep themselves and their clothing clean: any cuts, abrasions or wounds they have should be covered.
- ☒ The premises of tattooing, including any furniture or mats, are kept hygienically clean and in good repair.
- ☒ Any article that has penetrated the skin or is contaminated with blood must be disposed of immediately, as infectious or biological waste.
- ☒ There must be no smoking or alcohol use during the tattooing process.
- ☒ Animals should not be permitted on the premises where tattooing activities are carried out.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

- ☒ Employers in the customary tattooing industry should provide adequate training for staff in all areas of hygiene, infection control and first aid.
- ☒ All tattooists/tufuga should be vaccinated against hepatitis B.

2. Hand washing

Washing your hands greatly reduces the presence of germs that can cause infection. It is equally as important and effective as wearing gloves while tattooing. This is the first line of defence to protect both your clients and yourself. Hands should be washed using soap and clean water. Contaminated water could harm you and your clients.

After the area of the client's body to be tattooed is washed, the tufuga (and any assistant in contact with the blood of a person receiving a tatau) should wash their hands prior to putting on gloves. First remove all hand jewellery. Hands should be washed again if the tufuga or assistant leaves the tattoo area and returns after a break. Hands should be washed before putting on gloves and after removing and disposing of gloves.

Antibacterial soap should be used to wash hands.

Proper hand washing consists of 5 steps:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Manuia le aso fanau" song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them

3. Gloves (Personal Protective Equipment for the hands)

Gloves not only prevent clients from being infected, they protect the tufuga from being exposed to infected blood.

The tufuga (and any assistant in contact with the blood of a person receiving a tatau) should wear a clean pair of disposable gloves at all times during the tattoo process. Any time the tufuga and assistants leave the tattooing premises; all individuals should re-wash their hands and put on a new pair of disposable gloves before resuming the tattoo process on the client's body.

Gloves should be changed if they tear. Gloves should never be washed or re-used. They should be disposed of immediately.

Used gloves should be disposed of as medical and biohazard waste as per the Infection Control Policy 2011-2016, the Health Ordinance of 1959, and the National Healthcare Waste Policy 2006.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

4. Sterilisation

Sterilisation is a process to ensure that the tools used by a tattooist are free of bacteria and viruses. This is a safety preventative measure to assist tattooists and their clients.

Sterilisation with an autoclave

An autoclave is a pressure chamber used to heat and sterilise surgical equipment. Autoclaves are expensive and not accessible to everyone. Talk to your local district health centre about using their autoclave for sterilising tatau instruments.

An autoclave can be used for traditional tatau instruments as well as palagi tattoo machines. Not all tools and parts can withstand autoclave temperatures. For those instruments, use chemical sterilisers instead.

Note that for sterilising equipment, an autoclave is only effective if pure filtered sterile water is used. Otherwise there is still risk of infection. Follow the Manufacturer's instructions of proper temperature, maintenance and loading procedures for the autoclave.

Sterilisation with chemical sterilizer

All tattooing equipment whether traditional tatau instruments or palagi needles and tattoo machines should follow these sterilisation procedures;

1. Reusable instruments must be cleaned as soon as possible after use. Firstly, all residue, ink, blood and tissue should be removed. The equipment must be washed with clean hot water and soap so all visible traces of organic matter are removed. Immerse instruments in hot water and detergent in a sink. While holding the instruments under the surface of the water, scrub the instruments with a heat-disinfected cleaning brush (toothbrush). This step may be carried out using an ultrasonic cleaner, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Rinse cleaned instruments in hot running water. This is done so that chemical disinfectants work properly. Blood is known to disrupt chemicals that sterilise and disinfect.
2. After the equipment has been washed, it must then be sterilised using chemicals to kill any microscopic bacteria, viruses, or other pathogens. For sterilisation of all instruments (palagi and traditional), you should use tuberculocidal chemicals. These chemicals can kill one of the strongest bacteria (TB) and therefore can kill all other bacteria and viruses transmitted by blood. Proper sterilisation includes using both of the following;
 - Sodium hypochlorite 5.25%-6.25% with a dilution of 1:100 (Source: CDC)
 - Ethyl Alcohol 95%

Alternatively, there are two products that are effective and affordable for sterilising both human skin wounds and traditional tatau tools. They are;

- Microdacyn an alkaline solution (pH>11) of sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl) which is the sodium salt of hypochlorous acid (HOCl)
- Electromycin an alkaline solution (pH>11) of sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl) which is the sodium salt of hypochlorous acid (HOCl)

The cost for treatment of a large area of skin with these products is approximately 13 sene.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

Other disinfectants approved for use on traditional tatau instruments, that are also in stock at all hospitals, through the National Health Service are;

- Parasafe (for tools that cannot be put in an autoclave)
- Mis Detergent or Getin Clean (for tools that will be put in an autoclave after being cleaned)

These chemicals in particular are used by the National Health Service for surgical tools and are adequate for steriliser traditional tatau instruments as well as non-disposable palagi tattoo machine parts.

Soak and scrub tools in the selected steriliser mixed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and soak for at least twenty (20) minutes. Clean with sterile water. Allow tools to air dry for at least 45 minutes before reuse, protecting them from contaminants while they are drying. Store tools in a sterile bag if possible.

Follow the safety guidelines for using these products to prevent any injury to self in using these products. Follow directions for use of products with the above active ingredients

For tattooing with palagi tattoo machines, sterile pre-packaged needles should be used. Needles should not be used if they have exceeded their expiration date. Needles should be disposed of between clients. New ink and ink reservoirs should be used for each client to prevent cross-contamination. All equipment that is non-disposable should be washed and sterilised between clients.

For traditional tatau instruments, all tools should be properly sterilized between clients with enough time given between tatau sessions to achieve sterilisation. If this is not possible, a separate sterilised set of tools should be used while one set is in the sterilisation process.

By keeping your equipment clean, you are protecting all of your future clients from infection. You are also preventing yourself from getting an infection in the event you accidentally pierce your skin with a tatau tool.

All tattoo equipment should be stored in sterile and regularly cleaned containers to prevent exposure to pathogens between uses. All ato'au must be cleaned and sterilized before tattooing tool are placed in them. Used and clean tools must not come into contact with each other.

In addition to sterilising traditional tools and affected skin areas, all surfaces that come into contact with human blood must be cleaned and then sterilised with tuberculocidal disinfectant or recommended alternative. This includes but is not limited to mats, tables, chairs, and floors. The physical space where tattooing is occurring must be kept clean and in good repair at all times.

5. Hygienic procedures during the tattooing process

- ❖ Before the tattooing process begins, the area of skin needs to be shaved, cleaned and then sterilised to remove any bacteria or viruses that may be present on the skin.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

- ❖ For a tattoo with palagi needles and machines, new sterile packaged needles should be used for every client. Every needle is to be used on 1 client only
- ❖ New reservoirs (or holders) of ink should be used for each client to prevent cross-contamination. In palagi tattoo methods, sterile bottled ink is used for tattoos. It is pooled into a reservoir or container to dip the needles into during the tattoo process. Each client should have a separate reservoir of ink so that the ink is not contaminated with another client's blood.

For traditional Samoan tatau, organic compounds (lama) are mixed to make the ink. This traditional process does not allow for sterilisation. The tufuga should communicate this to the client as a possible risk of infection. In traditional tatau where modern synthetic (sterile) ink is used, tufuga should make sure that each client has a separate pool of ink held in a sterilised container. This means one client has one reservoir of ink.

- ❖ Gloves should be worn during the entire process to ensure your skin does not come into contact with any blood. If blood does get on your skin;
 1. Stop
 2. Remove and safely dispose of gloves
 3. Rinse affected area in clean water
 4. Clean with antimicrobial soap
 5. Sterilize with hand sanitizer or a recommended disinfectant
 6. Put on a pair of clean gloves and continue the tattoo process
- ❖ During the tattooing process, be sure that no unwashed hands, hands without gloves, feet, sweat, un-cleaned objects, or unsterilized objects come into contact with the client's tattooed area of skin. Feet can sometimes come into contact with a tattooed area during a traditional tattooing ceremony
- ❖ No smoking, consumption of alcohol, or drug use should be allowed on the tattooing premises during the tattooing process. This applies to all individuals present.
- ❖ After the tattoo process has been completed, remove gloves and safely dispose of them. Then put on a clean pair of gloves if you are starting another session or working with another client.
- ❖ Once you are wearing clean gloves, you can then proceed with gently cleaning the tattooed skin area of blood and ink.
- ❖ Once the area is clean apply a sterile bandage and advise the client to remove it when they are home and on how to care for their tattoo.
- ❖ Once the client leaves the tattooing studio, all surfaces and equipment must be cleaned and sterilised before the next client comes to get a tattoo.



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

6. Maintain clean tattooing premises

Whether the tattooing process is occurring in a formal tattoo parlour or in a fale Samoa as part of a community ceremony, all surfaces should be cleaned and sterilised to prevent infection.

What are tattooing premises? This term refers to any physical area in which a tattoo is taking place. This could be a tattoo studio or parlour, community or residential fale, ceremonial platform, or physical area where the tattoo process is taking place.

All surfaces in this area should be cleaned and sterilised to prevent infection to the clients, tufuga, and tufuga assistants. This applies to any tables, platforms, fine mats, mats, chairs, trays, plates, or other surfaces that blood, ink, skin or tattooing instruments touch or come into contact with.

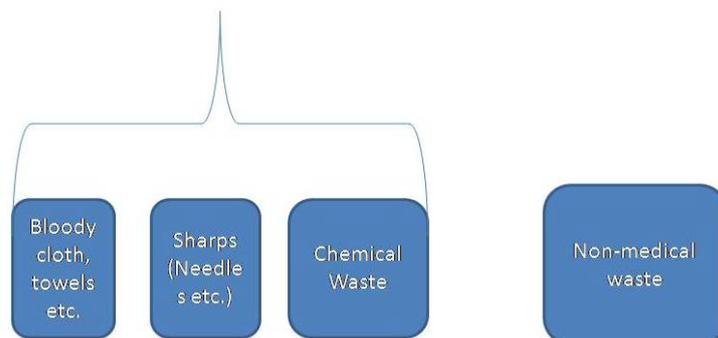
Unclean surfaces can spread infection even if good tattoo infection control processes are adhered to.

7. Proper disposal of waste

All disposable needles, cloths, gloves, or other materials (aside from non-disposable tattoo tools) should be treated as healthcare waste. This means there are special ways of collecting and disposing of these materials so that no tufuga, assistant tufuga, or client is at risk of infection.

The first step is to ensure that any disposable materials that come into contact with client blood are separated into a separate container from normal waste. Needles or sharps and chemical waste in particular should also be separated from waste as well. The following figure shows the different waste bins you need to safely organize waste

Medical Waste From Tattooing



Sharps, chemicals, and other disposable waste that came into contact with human blood should each be disposed in separate containers, all apart from non-medical waste. These containers must be safe and secure so that no waste leaks out in the environment and no person handling the waste containers is exposed to these objects when handling the trash.

Waste from tattooing **SHOULD NOT** be disposed of in normal rubbish containers due to risk of spreading infection to those handling waste. When used needles and other sharps used in tattooing are buried, the environment is damaged and people are still at risk of coming into contact with



Health Guidelines for Tattooing

contaminated materials. Burning tattooing waste is also harmful to the environment and increases the risk of setting fire to the premises.

Collection and transportation of this waste can be arranged through the Ministry of Health. Please contact the ministry at 68100. For further information on these guidelines, please consult the National Healthcare Waste Policy 2006, which you can access on <http://www.health.gov.ws>

8. Client register

If an infection does occur, it is important to keep track of your clients so that Ministry of Health and National Health Service personnel can provide them with treatment, care and prevent the infection from spreading to other clients.

Tufuga can help by keeping a register of their clients that has the name, address, and contact information of everyone who gets a tattoo. This information should be kept confidential by the tufuga. It will greatly assist infection control and contact tracing efforts by the Ministry of Health in case any threats arise.

9. Resources for Tufuga

The Environmental Protection Agency has a registered list of recommended disinfectants that is updated regularly. The lists can be accessed via the following link. List A: EPA's Registered Antimicrobial Products as Sterilizers and List B: EPA Registered Tuberculocide Products are of particular interests to tufuga.

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/selected-epa-registered-disinfectants>

The Centre for Disease Control also has information for tufuga on infection control and safe practices for tattooing available at the following link:

http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/body_art/contamination.html