

## Chief Health Officer Advisory

3 June 2014

Status: Active

## Tattoo ink safety warning for tattoo premises

**Status:** Active**Date issued:** 3 June 2014**Issued by:** Dr Michael Ackland, Deputy Chief Health Officer, Victoria**Issued to:** All premises conducting tattooing**Key messages**

- There have been nine recent recalls of tattoo inks in the European Union. The risk classification notified by European authorities for all these product recalls is 'serious'.
- It is not known whether these unsafe inks have been, or are being, used in tattoo parlours engaged in skin penetration activities in Australia. However, all premises conducting tattooing should be aware of these recalls and should ensure that they are not using these products.

**What is the issue?**

The EU RAPEX system (a rapid alert system for non-food dangerous products) has reported nine recent recalls of tattoo inks in the European Union.

The following products have been recalled (for further product information see the attached document):

Product	Brand	Product name
Shader and Liner tattoo set	Colourking	Tribal black, Crimson Red and Lavender
Tattoo ink	Kuro Sumi Colors	Dragons Breath Red
Tattoo ink	Intenze	Cherry Bomb
Tattoo ink	Eternal Ink	Bringing you the brightest color period – Lipstick Red
Tattoo ink	Dragon Tattoo Ink	Unknown
Tattoo ink	Intenze	Dark Advanced Black and Grey Tattoo Ink Formula, Dark Tone – Bob Tyrrell Edition
Tattoo ink	Silverback Ink	Unknown
Tattoo ink	Intenze	Dark Purple
Tattoo ink	StarBrite	Unknown

The risk classification notified by European authorities for all these product recalls is 'serious'. The products recalled originated mainly from the US (five products), China (three products), and Japan (one product) indicating that inks sourced from North America are not safer than those from other countries.

Seven of the products contained excessive levels of the cancer-causing chemical (carcinogen) 4-methyl-m-phenylendiamine. Four of these products contained not only excessive 4-methyl-m-phenylendiamine but also other contaminants (including lead and copper or arsenic, lead and nickel).

It is not known whether these unsafe inks have been, or are being, used in tattoo parlours engaged in skin penetration activities in Australia.

## Who is at risk?

Premises which use these products may put individuals getting tattoos at risk.

Individuals are advised that getting any tattoo carries some health risks. The safest way to get tattoos is from professional tattoo premises that are registered with the local council.

## Prevention

### For tattoo premises:

All premises conducting tattooing are advised to be aware of the recent recalls of tattoo ink in the European Union and ensure that they not using these products.

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* there is a requirement for all businesses involving tattooing to be **registered** with the local Council.

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009* set out the requirements that proprietors or occupiers of premises registered under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* must observe. These include:

- The premises must be kept clean.
- Any article used for penetrating the skin must be sterile at the time of use.
- Any article that has penetrated the skin or is contaminated with body fluids/substances must be either disposed of immediately after use or cleaned and sterilised before being used on another person.
- Any other used article must be clean before being used on another person.
- Proprietors or occupiers must ensure that each person in the business who carries out any procedures on any client keep themselves clean, and have no exposed cuts, abrasions or wounds, before carrying out a process (procedure).
- Proprietors or occupiers of premises must ensure that easily accessible hand washing facilities are available for use by staff.
- Proprietors or occupiers must provide written health information to each client about the potential health risks associated with skin penetration procedures.
- Proprietors or occupiers of tattooing and body piercing premises are required to maintain certain client records. They must ensure that the information be kept for a period of 12 months, be stored at the premises where the business is conducted and take reasonable steps to protect the information contained in the records.

### For consumers:

Getting any tattoo carries some health risks. The safest way to get tattoos is from professional tattoo premises that are registered with your local council in Australia. Avoid getting tattoos in other countries outside Australia, particularly in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and South America.

## More information

### Industry information

Department of Health: <http://ideas.health.vic.gov.au/guidelines/personal-care-body-art-industries.asp>

### Consumer information

Better Health Channel: <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Tattoos>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Ackland', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Michael Ackland

Deputy Chief Health Officer

Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne.