

Tattoos and pain zones

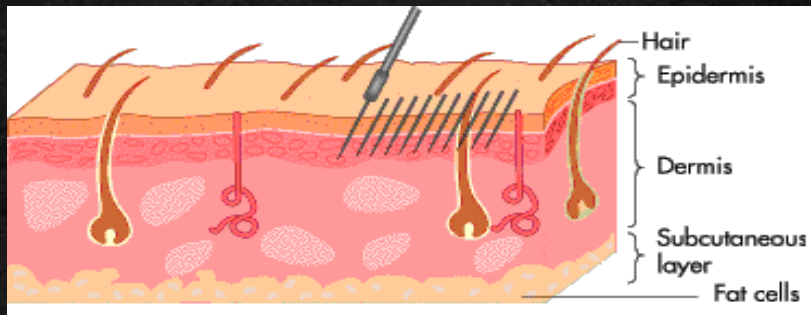


Today, tattoos are created by injecting ink into the skin. The injection is done with a needle (or needles) that are attached to a needle holder. The needles move up and down several hundred times per minute, penetrating the skin about 1.5 to 2 mm. What you see when you look at a tattoo is actually the ink that remains in the skin after the tattooing process.

Our skin consists of three layers:

- Epidermis (the outer layer)
- Dermis (the middle layer)
- Hypodermis (the deepest and thickest layer)

The ink is not in the epidermis, which is the outer layer of the skin that we see and which changes constantly, but is located at the top of the dermis and can be seen through the epidermis. The penetration of the needle into the tissue creates a wound that triggers a local inflammatory response, and in this way, the ink is permanently retained.

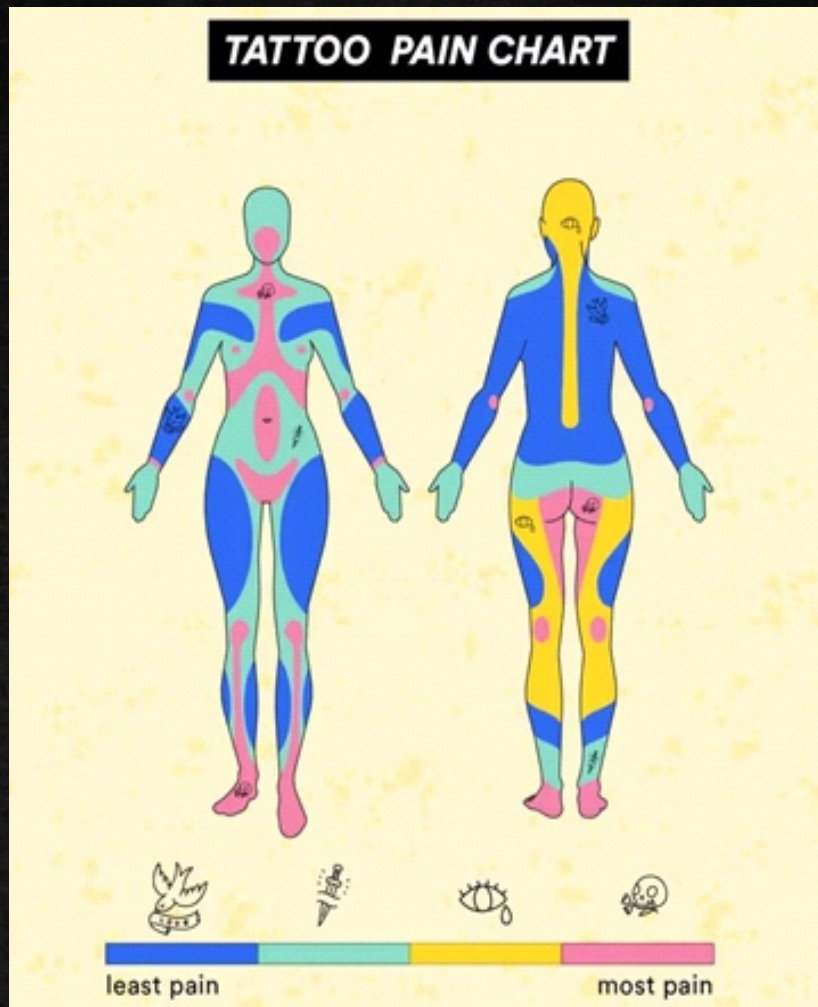


What is very important to know if you want to get a tattoo is to avoid alcohol 24 hours before the tattooing and to get a good night's sleep the night before your appointment. Depending on when you are getting tattooed, have a hearty meal two hours prior to the session. Do not take aspirin 24 hours before getting tattooed. If you are on medication, ask your doctor if you can get a tattoo while taking it. People with heart issues, those suffering from diabetes, epilepsy, hemophilia, and individuals who are mentally unstable must consult a doctor before getting tattooed!

If you have issues with dermatitis (eczema), psoriasis, or shingles, it is very important to inform the tattoo artist so they know how to proceed, as areas affected by skin diseases should not be tattooed!

It is very important that, in addition to your tattoo artist, you also take care of these things to make the tattooing experience a positive one.

Some of the most painful places to get tattooed:



Armpit: It is said that getting a tattoo in the armpit is seriously painful. In fact, it is considered so difficult to tattoo this super sensitive area that most tattoo artists advise against it.

Ribs: Thin skin + minimal fat + protruding bones make the ribs a perfect recipe for a tattoo that will make you grimace (or cry). Since the ribs move while you breathe, this can further intensify the feeling of vibrating pain.

Ankles and shins: These bones are likely at the same pain level as rib tattoos. Your ankles and shins are covered by a thin layer of skin, making these spots super vulnerable under the needle.

Groin area: Delicate skin + many nerve endings = pain.

Nipples and breasts: It's no secret that nipples and breasts are sensitive areas with many nerve endings. So yes, this hurts.

Elbows and knees: You know when you accidentally bump your knee? Well, now imagine a needle vibrating in those spots. Definitely not funny.

Back of the knees: Loose, soft, stretchy skin behind the knees is full of nerve endings.

Hips: "Hips don't lie" and neither do we—getting a tattoo on the hips can make you scream. This is especially true if you don't have much fat around your hips.

Neck and spine: Your neck and spine are bony, sensitive, and full of nerve endings... need we say more?

Head, face, and ears: Like your neck, these areas of the body have many nerve endings and little fat.

Lips/inner lips: Tattoos on the inner lips were a passing trend, but the experience can haunt you long after they fade. Your lips have many nerve endings, and the area often bleeds, swells, or bruises.

Arms, fingers, feet, and toes: Many nerve endings here can make these areas very painful. Specifically, the nerves in your hands and feet can sometimes spasm under the needle.

Stomach: Tattoos on the stomach can cause moderate to severe pain due to sensitive skin. However, reportedly, firm skin on the stomach makes the process less painful.

Inner biceps: The bicep muscles may help alleviate pain. However, the skin on the inner biceps is usually sensitive and loose, making tattooing quite painful. The inner biceps area may also take longer to heal than

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Enough fat, firm skin, fewer nerve endings, and no bone—these factors usually make the experience less painful. Areas that are more tolerable for tattooing include:

Upper outer thigh: This part of the body is covered with a layer of fat and has fewer nerve endings. Therefore, this is one of the least painful areas to get tattooed.

Forearm: Forearms usually have enough muscle and thicker skin with fewer nerve endings, making the experience less painful.

Outer shoulders: This is another area that is generally not too bad for tattooing, thanks to the thick skin and fewer nerve endings.

Outer biceps: With plenty of muscle and few nerves, the outer biceps are usually less painful to tattoo.

Calves: Calves have enough fat and muscle, plus few nerve endings. You'll likely manage low to moderate pain if your tattoo artist does a full mural here.

Upper and lower back: As long as you avoid bony areas like the spine, hips, or ribs, the upper and lower back are generally not too problematic for tattooing.

How much does getting a tattoo hurt?

Again, pain is personal, so no one can say how much it will hurt you. However, there is definitely consensus in the tattoo community about the types of pain you might experience.

Burning pain: After the artist works on the same area of your skin for a while, the skin can become irritated and inflamed, leading to a burning sensation. This feeling is also common in areas with more fat. While it may not be the most intense pain, you will definitely feel the burn!

Dull or "background" pain: When the needle buzzes, vibrates, and pokes your skin, your body produces stress hormones like adrenaline to counteract the pain. According to researchers, this can ease the sensation during the first few hours. Talking to the artist, watching TV, or distracting your mind (even with virtual reality, as in a 2021 study) can make the pain feel more like background noise.

Pain like scratching: Tattooing is often compared to a cat continuously scratching you. While it's not the most intense pain, it can make you wince—especially if the artist is using multiple needles, as in shading. This usually occurs away from bones or ultra-sensitive areas.

Sharp or stabbing pain: In more sensitive areas of the body with more nerve endings and thinner skin (like the inner wrist), what once felt like scratching can feel like multiple bee stings. This can be intense and may seem like the needle is penetrating deeply. This also happens when the artist is making fine details. However, too much stabbing pain may indicate that an inexperienced artist is pushing the needle too deep into your skin, which can lead to a problem called "tattoo blowout."

Vibrating pain: There's nothing quite like the sensation when the needle vibrates against your bones and resonates throughout your body, right? You might feel this vibration on the outer wrist, elbows, ribs, and joints—especially when the needle moves quickly. If you have less fat around your bones, you're



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How to reduce pain during tattooing?

If you ask us, taking steps to reduce pain doesn't make you weak—it makes you smart! Here's how you can help alleviate pain during tattooing:

1. **Choose a quality professional.** Check their previous work, reviews from past clients, and certifications in advance. Going to an experienced professional reduces the risk of unnecessary pain or complications such as infections and raised, inflamed tattoos.
2. **Take breaks.** Ask your artist if it's okay to take a break when you're feeling overwhelmed. A compassionate artist will understand. Larger tattoos are often done in several sessions, but you can also request to finish the tattoo over multiple sessions if you need a break.
3. **Stay sober.** Getting a tattoo while intoxicated with a stranger from a bar is not the best idea—not just because of regret the next day. Alcohol thins your blood and can cause bleeding, bruising, and excessive pain during the experience. It can also make the result a bit messy. For this reason, quality tattoo studios will not accept drunk clients.
4. **Get enough sleep and reduce stress.** Resting and minimizing stress before getting tattooed can help ease the pain on the big day. Breathe in, breathe out!

I wouldn't lie—getting a tattoo hurts! But how much that pain affects you varies from person to person. Factors like where you're getting tattooed, biological sex, pain tolerance, and whether you've had tattoos before can influence how everything goes.

To avoid unnecessary pain and complications, choose a skilled, experienced artist with the necessary certifications and a portfolio that demonstrates their work. Also, aftercare is very important, as it can help your new tattoo heal nicely and without pain.

