Tat Caveat

October 1, 2003 By Jennifer Block

Tattoos have been getting some bad ink. A recent study found that they may put you at higher risk for hepatitis C than previously thought (though you are less likely to develop acute symptoms and so may not know it). Curiously, the CDC has downplayed the data and discouraged hep testing. The study's lead author, Robert W. Haley, MD, strongly disagrees, calling for government oversight of parlors. No federal regs exist, though some states and cities require tat artists to pass an infection-control course and studio inspections. To decorate your body disease-free, run this checklist by the artiste: washed hands, gloves, disposable ink cups and an autoclave sterilization machine.

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