

AFTERCARE

- Wash your hands before and after touching the tattooed areas especially if there is any fluid or blood present. Wash areas gently with water.
- Pat dry with clean cloth. Ensure cloths are either disposed of or washed in hot water after each use.
- Keep your tatau/tattoo out of direct sunlight
- Wear loose clothing. Do not share bedding, clothing and towels
- Avoid scratching - keep nails short to avoid damage from scratching
- Take pain relief medication as needed, if unsure seek your Family Doctor's advice

Signs to watch out for include: increasing redness, soreness, swelling, the presence of pus, fever (feeling very hot or cold), diarrhoea or boils.

If you have any worries about your health, you should contact your local Family Doctor immediately and inform your Tufuga / tattooist

This resource is available from health.govt.nz or your local Authorised Provider: health.govt.nz/pages/contact-us.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Your Family Doctor:

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Your Tufuga /Tattooist:.....

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Emergency services: 111

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

TRADITIONAL TATTOOING





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What is Tatau?

Tatau is the Samoan tradition of applying tattoo, or tatau, by hand, that has been unbroken for over two thousand years. Many Pacific Islands have traditional tattooing.

Who does the Tatau?

The Samoan tatau artist is called a Tufuga. The skill is passed from father to son, each tatau artist learning as an apprentice over many years. Tufuga's in training often spend hours tapping and practising designs using a comb, or au.

How is the Tatau done?

The comb or au is made from sharpened boar's teeth fastened together, with a portion of turtle shell, to a wooden handle. The Tufuga uses a mallet to tap the teeth of the ink laden comb into the skin to create the tatau pattern using only simple guidemarks.

RISKS

Traditional tattooing does have risk. Any breaking of the skin's surface means there is a risk of infection. Common bacteria can get in and may cause scarring or the person to become sick.

Even invisible amounts of infected blood can pass on infection. Bugs spread in blood include:

- Bacteria that cause skin infections.
- Hepatitis B and C, which can cause inflammation of the liver, long term illness, liver damage and cancer.
- HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) – the virus that causes AIDS,

Because of the nature of the traditional tools used it is impossible to completely eliminate the risk of blood borne infections. Attention to hygiene by the tattooist can make the risks smaller.

WHEN GETTING A TATTOO...

- It's your body, so it's your choice. **Get information to help you make a wise choice. It is important to check that your Tufuga/ tattooist will keep you safe as well as do a good job of your tatau.**
- See and talk to your Family Doctor first, especially if you are getting an extensive tatau. **Discuss any health conditions (eg diabetes) or worries that could affect your ability to recover from the tatau.**

WHAT TO EXPECT

Don't be afraid to ask your Tufuga /tattooist questions

- It is important that your skin is clean and intact before your tattoo is started – always shower, use antibacterial soap and thoroughly clean your body before tattooing is carried out.

Your Tufuga /tattooist and assistants should:

- Help you understand fully the process of the tatau/ tattoo, risks involved and what to do if things go wrong.
- Use disposable gloves and eye protection.
- Always use newly prepared ink for each person being tattooed.
- Work in a clean room and there should not be smoking in that room.
- Sterilise equipment and keep it in a clean storage area.
- Dispose of used ink and blood stained towels separately (and securely) from domestic rubbish.
- Give you clear 'after care' instructions to minimise pain and risk of wound infection.
- Agree a sensible time interval between tatau sessions that enables your body to recover. Remember to allow for any redness or swelling to go away before your next session.