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HYGIENE AND PREVENTION OF INFECTIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS; EFFECT OF REGULATION, CONTROL AND VIGILANCE

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In 2007 the Ministry of Health implemented uniform regulations that apply to professionals that perform tattooing and permanent make-up. These regulations include hygiene guidelines that are developed by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment in cooperation with representatives of the tattooing associations. The guidelines contain a list of requirements including studio interior (for example location of hand-washing facility), cleanness of the studio, safe use of permitted equipment and products, sterilization methods.

A permit has to be applied for every three years to assure that practice complies with the national guidelines for hygiene as well as with age-limits.

A permit may be granted after an inspection by the local health service, during which the act of tattooing has to be performed. While a permit is due, the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority may carry out unannounced inspections randomly or based on complaints.

Effect of regulation is measured intermittently. In an explorative survey 2011, 284 persons with one or more tattoos were questioned whether complications had appeared after placement. 0,4% of persons that had visited a licensed studio replied positive, compared to 16% of the persons that obtained their tattoo elsewhere. In additional research, infection was the main reported complication (43%). Although it has been suggested that tattooing and piercing are risk factors for HBV and HCV infections, a study in Amsterdam in 2011 found no evidence for an increased seroprevalence among persons with multiple tattoos. We suggest that uniform European hygiene guidelines would further contribute to safety of tattooing