

Chief Health Officer Advisory

5 June 2014

Status: Active

Tattoo ink safety warning for tattoo premises (update)

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Date issued: 5 June 2014

Issued by: Dr Michael Ackland, Deputy Chief Health Officer, Victoria

Issued to: All premises conducting tattooing

Key messages

- This advisory does not refer to a current Australian product recall and is for information only.
- The European Union (EU) has recalled nine tattoo ink products (listed in Table 1). Some of these products contain a chemical compound (phenylenediamines) and/or higher than permitted levels of trace metal contaminants.
- In Victoria, it is illegal to manufacture, sell, supply, possess or use products one to six* that the EU have recalled and these products should be disposed of by returning to the supplier. While products seven to nine are legal in Victoria, it is suggested that these products are not used.
- It is the responsibility of tattoo premises to ensure that they request a product quality data sheet (certificates of analysis or an equivalent statement) when purchasing inks from suppliers or directly from manufacturers to confirm that the product is safe and legal for use in Victoria.

What is the issue?

The EU RAPEX system, a rapid alert system for non-food dangerous products, has recalled particular tattoo ink products (refer to Table 1: Specifications of products recalled by EU RAPEX system).

Some of these products contain a chemical compound (phenylenediamines) and/or higher than permitted levels of trace metal contaminants. The European authorities have classified the recall risk as 'serious', the highest of four risk levels.

In Victoria, it is illegal to manufacture, sell, supply, possess or use products containing phenylenediamines in preparation for skin colouration (tattooing) unless authorised under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substance Act 1981*. Recalled products one to six* listed in Table 1 contain phenylenediamines and are thus illegal in Victoria unless authorised by exception. Any product should be disposed of by returning it to the supplier.

While recalled products seven to nine are legal in Victoria and they may present a risk to health, it is suggested that these products are not used.

Who is at risk?

There may be a health risk for individuals receiving tattoos from premises which use these products.

Table 1: Specifications of products recalled by EU RAPEX system

	Product	Brand	Origin	Specified recalled product name
1*	Shader and Liner tattoo set	Colourking	China	<i>Tribal black, Crimson Red and Lavender</i>
2*	Tattoo ink	Kuro Sumi Colors	Japan	<i>Dragons Breath Red (Lot #110)</i>
3*	Tattoo ink	Intenze	China	<i>Cherry Bomb</i> Barcode: 20366L2799034; Batch n°: SS29
4*	Tattoo ink	Eternal Ink	United States (US)	<i>Bringing you the brightest colour period – Lipstick Red</i> Batch number: Lot 139; Exp. Date: 28/12/16.
5*	Tattoo ink	Dragon Tattoo Ink	China	Model numbers: TP-1:77891;TP-2:77891; TP-3:77891
6*	Tattoo ink	Intenze	US	<i>Dark Advanced Black and Grey Tattoo Ink Formula, Dark Tone – Bob Tyrrell Edition</i> Model number: LOT: SS75; EXP: 03 (03/17) Batch: BK56DISimx40; REF:10559C23001
7	Tattoo ink	Silverback Ink	US	<i>Black 11, Exp 12/2015, Batch B 44021213</i>
8	Tattoo ink	Intenze	US	<i>Dark Purple;</i> Model number: ST1012DP Batch number: Lot: SS83; EXP: 09/30/16
9	Tattoo ink	StarBrite	US	<i>Scarlet Red; Batch SR74247</i>

Recalled products one to six* may contain the cancer-causing chemical (carcinogen) 4-methyl-m-phenyldiamine. Recalled products seven to nine may contain nickel, aromatic amines or hydrocarbons and may present a risk to health.

For further specific product information see the attached European Union tattoo ink product recall list.

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 are not using these products.

It is the responsibility of tattoo premises to ensure that they request a product quality data sheet (certificates of analysis or an equivalent statement) when purchasing inks from suppliers or directly from manufacturers to confirm that the product is safe and legal for use in Victoria.

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 premise cleanliness and infection prevention and control measures for staff and equipment used.

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/tattooing.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.