

# TATTOOS & SKIN:

## CAN YOU SAFELY TATTOO OVER MOLES?

*Why Tattooing Over Moles  
Is Unsafe*

*Health Risks of Tattooing  
Over Moles*

*Case Studies and Medical  
Evidence*

**Recommendations for  
Tattoo Artists and the  
Public**





TATTOOING OVER MOLES IS DISCOURAGED BECAUSE OF THE MEDICAL RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS THAT CAN ARISE. HERE'S A DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF THE POTENTIAL OUTCOMES AND WHY AVOIDING TATTOOING OVER MOLES IS ESSENTIAL:

# WHY TATTOOING OVER MOLES IS UNSAFE

## 1. RISK OF CONCEALING SKIN CHANGES

Moles are pigmented lesions that can change in size, shape, or color due to various factors, including the development of skin cancers like melanoma. **Tattoo Ink Concealment:** Tattoo ink can obscure moles, making it nearly impossible to notice early warning signs such as asymmetry, irregular borders, color changes, diameter increase, or elevation (ABCDEs of melanoma). **Delayed Diagnosis:** Melanomas that develop in tattooed areas are often diagnosed at later stages, reducing the chances of effective treatment.

## 2. PHYSICAL DAMAGE TO THE MOLE

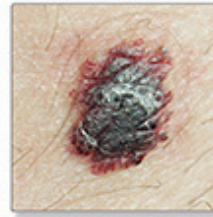
Tattooing involves puncturing the skin with needles, which can irritate or damage the mole. This physical trauma can result in:

- **Inflammation:** Tattooing over a mole may cause localized redness, swelling, or irritation complicating the assessment of mole health.
- **Bleeding:** The increased vascularity of some moles makes them prone to bleeding, which can lead to incomplete tattoo coverage or poor healing.
- **Potential Stimulation of Abnormal Cell Growth:** Although rare, some studies suggest that trauma to a mole could theoretically trigger abnormal growth, potentially increasing cancer risk.



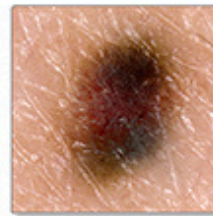
# A

is for **ASYMMETRY**  
If you draw a line down the middle of the mole, you will find that each half of a melanoma doesn't match in size.



# B

is for **BORDER**  
The edges of early Melanoma are quite likely to be irregular, crusty or notched.



# C

is for **COLOUR**  
Healthy moles are uniform in colour. A variety of colours, especially black, white and/or blue is worrying.



# D

is for **DIAMETER**  
Melanomas are usually larger in diameter than 6 millimetres, although they may be smaller.



# E

is for **EVOLVING**  
When a mole begins to change in size, shape, colour, or features or develops symptoms like itching, tenderness or bleeding, this points to danger.

## 3. DIFFICULTY IN MONITORING

**Melanoma Development** If melanoma develops in a tattooed mole, the ink may:

- **Mask Irregular Pigmentation:** Changes in a mole's color, one of the critical signs of melanoma, can be hidden under tattoo pigments.
- **Obscure Borders:** Irregular or blurred edges of a mole are a warning sign, but tattoos can make it harder to discern these changes.
- **Complicate Skin Exams:** Dermatologists may struggle to assess tattooed areas during routine checks or dermoscopic evaluations.



# HEALTH RISKS OF TATTOOING OVER MOLES

## 1. MISDIAGNOSIS OR MISSED DIAGNOSIS

Melanomas in tattooed areas are often misdiagnosed or missed altogether because the changes are hidden under the ink.

In some cases, the development of melanoma beneath a tattoo has only been detected when the cancer has already progressed.

## 2. TATTOO-RELATED COMPLICATIONS

*Allergic Reactions:* Tattoo ink can cause skin reactions such as itching, swelling, or redness. When applied over a mole, these reactions can make it even harder to evaluate the health of the mole.

*Infections:* Tattooing introduces a risk of bacterial infections, which can further irritate or damage the mole.

## 3. SURGICAL COMPLICATIONS

If a suspicious mole in a tattooed area requires removal, the presence of tattoo ink may complicate the procedure.

*Tattoo Distortion:* Removing a mole from a tattooed area can leave scars or disrupt the design, leading to aesthetic concerns.

*Interference with Pathology:* Tattoo ink particles can migrate into the dermis, potentially contaminating biopsy samples and complicating histopathological analysis.

# ***CASE STUDIES AND MEDICAL EVIDENCE***

A study published in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology (JAAD) highlights cases where melanoma went undetected due to tattoo coverage. In these cases, delayed diagnoses resulted in more aggressive cancer treatments, including wide excisions and chemotherapy. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) advises against tattooing over moles and emphasizes the importance of leaving moles visible for regular self-checks and professional skin exams.



## ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TATTOO ARTISTS AND THE PUBLIC***



### **1. FOR TATTOO ARTISTS**

- *Educate Clients:* Explain the risks of tattooing over moles, including the potential health complications.
- *Avoid the Area:* Work around moles to preserve their visibility for future monitoring.
- *Document Client Skin Conditions:* Note the location of moles and advise clients to monitor these areas for changes.

### **2. FOR THE PUBLIC**

- *Monitor Moles Regularly:* Use the ABCDEs of melanoma to assess moles for suspicious changes.
- *Consult a Dermatologist:* Before getting a tattoo, have moles checked by a dermatologist, especially if they appear atypical.
- *Choose Tattoo Placement Carefully:* Select areas free of moles to avoid complications.

# CONCLUSION



Tattooing over moles poses significant health risks, from concealing changes that could indicate melanoma to physically damaging the mole and complicating medical evaluations. Both tattoo artists and clients should prioritize safety by avoiding tattoos on or near moles and encouraging regular skin examinations. By maintaining clear visibility of moles, early detection of skin cancer becomes possible, potentially saving lives.

## CITATIONS

1. American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). "When Is a Mole a Problem?" Accessed January 23, 2025.  
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*Kate Connors is a seasoned tattoo artist with over 20 years of experience specializing in creating custom artwork that celebrates individuality while prioritizing client safety. As the co-owner of Studio68 Inc. Kate Connors is dedicated to elevating industry standards by promoting education on safe tattooing practices, including the importance of skin health. With a passion for continuous learning, Kate Connors actively researches and collaborates with professionals to ensure the highest level of care for clients. Recognized for their attention to detail and commitment to client well-being, Kate Connors has become an advocate for educating both the public and fellow artists. Whether in the studio or the classroom, Kate Connors combines artistic expertise with a mission to inform, inspire, and protect the tattoo community.*



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