

## Talk with teens about possible regret before they get tattoos, piercings

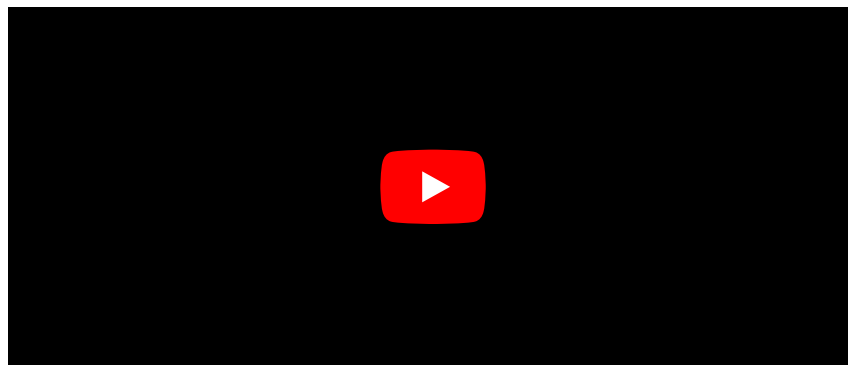
September 18, 2017

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Article type: [AAP National Conference & Exhibition 2017](#)

Topics: [Adolescent Health/Medicine](#)

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Many young people see a work of art when they admire friends' tattoos and body piercings. Perhaps your teen has asked to get one. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges parents to talk with their curious teens about the long-term effects of tattoos and piercings.

Body modifications used to be linked to risky practices like using drugs or alcohol, violence, eating disorders and sexual activity. But the science has changed. These behaviors are no longer closely linked. Tattoos and multiple piercings are common and more accepted among teens and young adults.

Teens still should think about the pros, cons and future before they ink or pierce. Tattoos and body piercings might affect the way others treat your teen at school, job interviews and work.

"Relationships, social status and aesthetic tastes may change," the AAP says.

In addition, most tattoo removals need several laser treatments. The average cost per treatment is about \$356, according to national data.

"Adolescents may overestimate the effectiveness of tattoo removal when having one placed and should be instructed that tattoo placement is permanent and that it is expensive and sometimes difficult to remove them," according to the AAP.

Some piercings also can be hard to heal. Stretching a pierced area to 2 gauge (6 millimeters) will cause it to become a permanent hole once the plug is removed, the AAP warns.

If your teen still wants a tattoo or piercing, consider the following:

- the legal age in your state (<http://bit.ly/2fw0AXX>) and whether you need to give permission;
- whether the tattoo or piercing can be covered up easily when wearing work clothes;

- whether piercings must be removed during sports; and
- what the teen will do if the tattoo fades or becomes lopsided if her body changes and how the tattoo or piercing will change during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

If your teen still wants one, be sure to go to a professional. The parlor or shop should be licensed. Before the procedure, check your teen's vaccine status. After, watch for signs of infection or allergic reactions.

Visit [HealthyChildren.org](http://HealthyChildren.org), the AAP website for parents, for care tips and signs of infection and allergies for tattoos, <http://bit.ly/HCtattoo>, and piercings, <http://bit.ly/HCPiercing>.

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- [AAP News story "Tattoos, piercings move into mainstream but may carry medical, other risks"](#)

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