

February 10, 2010

Unapproved tattoo parlours closed; all clients require testing

CALGARY – Following the closure of seven unapproved home-based tattoo and piercing parlours in the Calgary-area, Alberta Health Services (AHS) is recommending that individuals who received tattoos and/or piercings at any Calgary-area home-based or mobile parlour be tested for viruses that can be spread through unsanitary tattoo and piercing procedures.

“To prevent the spread of infection from one person to another, equipment used in tattooing, piercing and other procedures where the skin is broken must be sterilized or be a single-use item,” says Dr. Judy MacDonald, Deputy Medical Officer of Health, AHS-Calgary. “The home-based parlours closed by AHS did not have proper sterilization processes in place, meaning individuals who received tattoos or piercings through these operations may have been exposed to viruses such as Hepatitis B and C, and HIV.”

Simple blood tests can determine whether an individual has been infected. To arrange for this testing, individuals who have received tattoos or piercings at any home-based or mobile parlour should call HealthLink Alberta at 403.943.LINK (5465) or toll-free at 1.866.408.LINK (5465). HealthLink can also provide advice to anyone with concerns about tattooing or piercing.

AHS public health officials were alerted to these unapproved parlours through complaints from the public. The investigation into such operations is ongoing, and more closures are expected in the coming weeks.

“This is an unfortunate situation and an important reminder that people considering a tattoo, piercing or similar procedure must do their homework before they select a particular facility,” says Dr. MacDonald. “We have strict health and safety standards in place, and only those facilities that meet these standards are approved for these types of procedures.”

To confirm that any Calgary-area tattoo, piercing, or related facility is inspected and approved, call AHS-Calgary Environmental Health at 403.943.2288. All closure orders issued by AHS-Calgary are posted online at:

www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/publichealth/envhealth/healthinspections.htm.

People are also encouraged to ask the tattoo or piercing operation for a copy of the facility's most recent Health Inspection Report.

See the attached Backgrounder for further advice on selecting a safe tattoo/piercing facility. The Calgary-area tattoo/piercing operations that have been ordered to close are also listed in the Backgrounder.

- 30 -

For media inquiries, contact:
Shannon M. Evans
AHS Communications
P: 403.943.0597
C: 403.391.9132