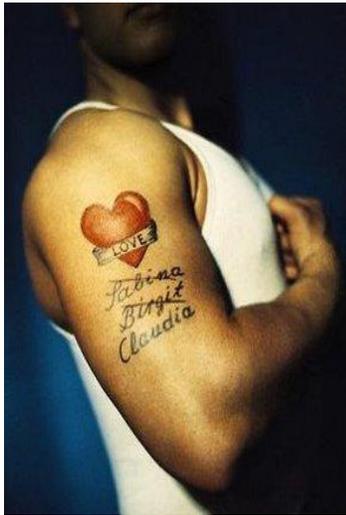


# Patricia Wong's Spring 2010 Newsletter

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## Dr. Wong's Tips for Getting a Tattoo



Are you thinking about being a little shocking, taking a walk on the wild side, showing others you are an independent, self-assured person, or searching for a change, perhaps creating a new you with a new look? ARE YOU CONTEMPLATING GETTING A TATTOO? Before you saunter down to the tattoo parlor, there are a number of important health factors to consider that tattoo artists rarely discuss with clients and should.

### Steps to take Prior to Driving to the Tattoo Parlor:

Start with a rub on tattoo or a temporary henna tattoo and wear it for several months. Are you in love with the colors, design, and size? Does it clash with your dressy black dress and but looks fabulous with T-shirts and jeans? Will this be a tattoo you would be proud to display at your son or daughter's wedding? Would you still love the way it looks on your forearm if you had to wear a short sleeve shirt because you were invited to play golf with the big boss and his partners in the law firm?

- ❖ Do not have a tattoo placed when you are inebriated.
- ❖ Do not get a tattoo because you and your friends are bored and cannot think of anything else to do.
- ❖ Do not have a tattoo placed as a sign of eternal love. If you choose to ignore my advice, at least do not do get an extremely large tattoo. You may truly regret this later as have several of my patients.
- ❖ Do not do it in the immediate aftermath of a personal crisis or major life change such as a breakup with long time partner, death, or job loss.
- ❖ If you feel you need to make a change in your life and the tattoo represents the change, first consider a vacation destination where you have never been or get a different hairstyle or color.
- ❖ Women who have not yet been pregnant should give careful consideration to having a tattoo placed on the breasts or abdomen. These body areas may develop significant stretch marks following child birth, which can distort the appearance of the tattoo.

One of my patients was appropriately emotionally devastated when her husband suddenly announced he was divorcing her after 30 years of marriage. She decided to treat herself to something fun and different and had a pretty floral vine tattooed on her leg, beginning at the ankle and extending to the hip. Unfortunately, after several weeks, she developed severe itching,

blistering, crusting, and soreness in all the areas where she had red pigment. She had developed a severe allergic reaction to the tattoo. She sought treatment from several dermatologists who specialized in laser removal of tattoos and all of them declined to treat her because of concern she could potentially develop anaphylaxis, which could be potentially life-threatening if laser was performed on the tattoo and dispersed the pigment throughout her body. All prescription topical and oral medications used to treat allergic reactions were completely ineffective for her.

If I had seen her before she had gotten the tattoo, I would have advised her to have a small flower tattooed on the ankle. A good tattoo artist could have later altered this to the climbing vine easily. Also an allergic reaction confined to a small area would have been more amenable to treatment.

**It is not possible to predict ahead of time how your skin may react. Risks besides an allergic reaction include infection and scarring.** The tattoo parlor should be clean and the needles sterilized. The tattoo artist should follow sanitary precautions to avoid spreading bacterial and viral infection. Certain body regions are more prone to scarring in everyone. Make an appointment to discuss this further with Dr. Wong. Be extremely cautious if you or someone in your family has a tendency for excessive scarring.

**You changed your mind and want it removed:**

- ❖ **Up to 20% of people change their minds and want to have their tattoo removed.** Don't assume you can reverse your decision with laser technology. Although the technology is continuing to improve, there are still risks to the procedure and there is no guarantee of perfect results.
- ❖ Tattoo removal is expensive. It will cost many times more than the tattoo itself. Depending on the tattoo, anywhere from 6 to 25 laser treatments may be needed. Removal can run many thousands of dollars. Insurance companies will not cover cosmetic or decorative tattoo removal.
- ❖ **Not every tattoo can be removed.** Professional tattoos are more difficult to remove than amateur tattoos. The ink is placed deeper within the skin and many different vibrant colors are used. In general, multicolored tattoos where the pigment has been placed deeply are the most difficult to remove. There is no one laser system that can remove all the colors in a given tattoo. In general, a different laser will be required for each color range. You may need 3 to 6 different lasers to treat 1 tattoo at each laser session.
- ❖ Not every tattoo can be removed without leaving scarring, a change in the skin texture and/or color of the skin. Permanent hypopigmentation or hyperpigmentation are possible side effects. Even with the best result there is still often a slight "ghost like" color remaining in the shape of the former tattoo.

**If you are certain you want to have a tattoo, Dr. Wong recommends the following:**

- ❖ Have your tattoo done professionally. Do not try to economize and have your friend do it at home with his ink and needle set? You will have a tattoo that looks like a three- year-old child drew it.
- ❖ Make sure words are spelled correctly and you have placed accents over the correct letters. Double-check the spelling in the dictionary even if you are positive you are correct. Having misspelled words tattooed on your body looks terrible and will be an annoying reminder of your mistake whenever you look at it. One of my teen-age patients had a friend tattoo what was intended to be a shocking four- letter expletive in bold capitals across his chest. Unfortunately, the C missing and he was quite distressed when I informed him of the correct spelling.
- ❖ **The chosen site for the tattoo should be free of moles, rashes, and skin growths.**
- ❖ The chosen site should be easy to see and easily accessible for washing and aftercare.

- ❖ Do not tattoo personal information on your body such as your name, telephone number, address, or social security number. I had a patient who tattooed this information on his chest out of fear he may one day have a medical emergency that would render him unconscious and he would not be correctly identified at the hospital.
- ❖ Start with a small tattoo in an inconspicuous body area and see if you and the tattoo are compatible.
- ❖ **The best colors for a first time tattoo are blue or green.** There is always time to get the colorful fire-breathing dragon wrapping around your torso.
- ❖ **Limit your color palate to no more than 2 colors for the first tattoo.** Be aware that tattoo artists mix many colors to make an unusual hue or to obtain an especially vibrant color. You may think you are getting 1 color but the peach color you chose is a combination of different pigments. Be advised that each of these pigments require a different wavelength of laser light for removal and maybe 6 different lasers! Ask the tattoo artist if it is a pure color pigment he or she will be using. Avoid custom mixed colors for your first tattoo.
- ❖ Consider having the tattoo done using inks developed by a company called Freedom 2. The inks are incorporated into polymer coated microbeads. These inks are more amenable to laser removal and require fewer treatments.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

If you have metallic components such as iron in your tattoo, it may interfere with MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) studies. There have been reports of patients experiencing burns, and an unpleasant tingling sensation when undergoing an MRI scan. Tattoo inks can contain aromatic amines (azo pigments), which may release carcinogens. It is forbidden to put these chemicals in cosmetics but it is not forbidden to have them in tattoo inks.

- ❖ **Make an appointment with Dr. Wong. She can evaluate your skin and give you an opinion as to how your skin may react to the tattoo pigments and your potential risk for scarring. Bring your tattoo design and colors that you are contemplating using with you for your appointment. Certain colors have more potential problems associated with them. Dr. Wong can advise you how to prepare your skin for tattoo placement and on aftercare to minimize complications and optimize healing. Getting a tattoo is painful! Ask Dr. Wong for a prescription for a topical anesthetic cream.**

Dr. Wong is no longer performing laser tattoo removal, but she is happy to discuss how to choose a dermatologist specializing in laser tattoo removal. She can also discuss alternative methods of tattoo removal that do not involve laser treatment. Please call our office to make an appointment if you have any of these concerns so she can assist you in your decision and help you responsibly prepare for placement of your tattoo.



## Diamond Dermabrasion is a "Girl's Best Friend"

In the October 2009 issue of the prestigious journal Archives of Dermatology, investigators at the University of Michigan compared different microdermabrasion systems and found that only the large diamond-studded microdermabrasion hand piece increased collagen in the dermis and improved photoaging changes.

Forty adults (men and women) ranging in age from 50-83 years with sun-damaged skin, had one forearm treated with diamond microdermabrasion and the other forearm with crystal microdermabrasion. Serial biopsies were taken before and after treatments. The samples were studied with special enzyme assays and tissue markers to assess cellular reaction and collagen production. The reaction in the dermal layer of the skin was similar to the response seen in wound healing where there is an increased production of type 1 and type 2 procollagen and an increase in the collagen production enhancer's heat shock protein 47 and prolyl 4-hydroxylase. In plain English, this translates as an increase in cellular secretion of specific proteins that enhance collagen production and increase synthesis of the extracellular matrix, which provides support, elasticity, and structure to the skin.

Microdermabrasion treatments using crystals showed absolutely no evidence of dermal remodeling the skin when tissue samples were studied. Photodamaged skin is composed of fractured collagen fibers in the dermis. This results in thinner skin, easy bruising, and increased wrinkling and sagging of the skin. This is because fibroblast cells are producing less collagen and more metalloproteinases (These enzymes degrade collagen. Ultraviolet radiation from the sun increases the activity of these enzymes).

Crystal microdermabrasion machines are commonly used in spas but do not afford the anti-aging benefits achieved with diamond dermabrasion. Diamond dermabrasion used in combination with topical collagen production boosters and antioxidants (to protect collagen from degradation) is an effective strategy for regaining the firmness and tightness of your skin. Multiple treatments performed every 2-3 weeks are recommended to see the best results. There is minimal morbidity and downtime associated with the treatments.

Dr. Wong has been providing diamond dermabrasion for her patients as one of the first line treatments for improving a number of conditions characteristic of aging skin. She has also observed excellent results for clearing acne, rosacea, and smoothing acne scars. The treatment deep cleans the skin allowing topical medications to be absorbed more effectively. This is a nice adjuvant therapy to combine with bleaching, anti-aging, and acne regimens.

## April is National Halitosis Month



**You:** Hey, Bob, have a mint!

**BOB:** No, thank you.

**You:** No, REALLY BOB, I INSIST YOU TAKE A MINT!

Do people seem to always be in a hurry when you want to chat? Have you noticed acquaintances moving away as you attempt to move closer to talk to them? Fifty per cent of Americans have a problem with bad breath.

Halitosis is a subject everyone has trouble mentioning to the offender. Mothers, best friends, spouses, and paramours are collectively guilty when it comes to discussing bad breath with their intimates. Why should this be such a social taboo, when you would be doing the person with halitosis a favor? Generally speaking, most people with bad breath are unaware their

breath stinks. This is due to their olfactory receptors being supersaturated with their mouth odor, causing them not to appreciate any difference between what is a pleasant versus an unpleasant odor.

To see if you have halitosis, go outside and breathe fresh air for a few minutes. This will allow your olfactory receptors to be cleared. Now lick the back of your hand and smell it after the saliva dries. If you find the odor unpleasant, continue reading. The most common cause of bad breath is poor oral hygiene. This leads to an overgrowth of gram negative anaerobic bacteria (*Fusobacterium polymorphum* and *nucleatum*, *Veillonella alcalescens*, *Bacteroides funiliformis*, *Bacteroides melanogenicus*, and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*) in the mouth which produce volatile sulfur containing fetid products such as hydrogen sulfide, methyl mercaptan, dimethylsulfide, and dimethyl disulfide. Cadaverine, putrescine, indole and skatole are also produced and contribute to breath smelling bad (these compounds are also present in flatus).

The most effective way to treat bad breath is to thoroughly cleanse the back one-third of the tongue; this is where the majority of bacteria reside that produce the foul smelling fermentation compounds. The front part of the tongue is constantly being cleansed when it is moved against the hard palate. The back of the tongue only contacts the soft palate, and this is not an effective cleansing action. Use an alcohol or chlorhexidine containing mouthwash and say "AHHHHHH" while gargling so the mouthwash will reach the back of your tongue.

#### **Mouthwashes that can help reduce odor causing oral bacteria:**

- **BreathRx - contains chlorhexidine**
- **Crest Pro-Health - contains cetylpyridinium**
- **Smart Mouth - Contains Zinc**

Using a tongue scraper can also help. This can be purchased over the counter at a drug store. Use toothpaste containing hydrogen peroxide. The oxygen released will make the environment less hospitable for the anaerobic bacteria. Brush the back of your tongue with your toothbrush. Wash your toothbrush in the dishwasher on a regular basis. Alternatively, mix a little hydrogen peroxide with your mouthwash and gargle with it. You may need to have your teeth cleaned every 3-4 months instead of the traditional 2 times a year. A plaque layer as thin as 0.1-0.2mm becomes depleted of oxygen creating the ideal environment for gram negative bacterial overgrowth. If you are unable to brush and floss after eating, rinse and gargle with water and chew sugarless gum. If you have bad breath accompanied by sinus pain, facial pain or discolored mucous when you blow your nose, you should see your doctor to be evaluated for a sinus infection. If none of the above measures are effective, see your dentist and internist for a more in depth evaluation. **By the way, it is now known that having periodontal disease increases your risk for coronary artery disease.** So theoretically, you could die from having bad breath.

#### **Causes of Halitosis**

- **Poor dental hygiene- cavities, gingivitis, excessive plaque accumulation**
- **Sinusitis**
- **Tonsillitis**
- **Rhinitis**
- **Nasal infections**
- **Mouth sores**
- **Medications**
- **Alcohol**
- **Cigarettes, tobacco**
- **Coffee, onions, garlic, pastrami, diets high in fat and protein**
- **Bronchitis**

- **Pneumonia**
- **Diabetes - not well controlled**
- **Dehydration**
- **Gastroesophageal reflux**
- **Oral cancer**
- **Salivary gland abnormalities**
- **Oral appliances-dentures, braces, retainers**
- **Oral Candidiasis**
- **Dry mouth**