



Vegans & Tattoos

Information and Advice

Q: I'm a Vegan and am concerned about tattooing, ink pigments, creams etc Please help!

A: Here's a short run-down of advice to make your experience as smooth as possible.

After a number of Vegan customers recently asking for advice on tattooing that fits in with their ethos, I thought I'd write a quick article about what is and isn't safe to use.

Inks:

A new wave of non-toxic tattoo inks made from organic pigments has emerged in recent years, after certain chemicals previously used in many tattoo inks started being linked to cancer. Brands like Eternal, Intenze, and Kuro Sumi are at the forefront, stating that their pigments are all natural. Eternal, Intenze, and Kuro Sumi take things a step further and also state that their inks are vegan-friendly, because they do not include glycerin carriers derived from animal fat, pigments made from crushed bone, or any other animal products or bi-products.

Check with your studio before you book in, they should be able to provide you with ingredients lists for the inks that they use.

Petroleum Jelly (Vaseline®):

Petroleum Jelly as a product is considered Vegan (it is not a direct product or by-product of living animals), however Unilever's Vaseline® is not due to the company taking part in animal testing. There are brands of petroleum jelly that do not test on animals (Vegaline® by Beeseline for example) and if you check your sources, likely some generic unbranded ones around too! Whilst for the very strict there are petroleum jelly alternatives such as avocado gels etc, I feel it is unlikely you will convince your tattooist to use them as a substitute for petroleum jelly in the application of your tattoo. Petroleum Jelly is an aid to the smooth application of a tattoo and any drawbacks particular to the process of tattooing whilst using a substitute would be unknown.



Sprays:

Sprays & alcohol wipes used during tattooing vary greatly - from green soap (not often used in the UK) through to Dettol®, TCP® and non-branded skin disinfectants. Again your tattooist should be able to tell you what they use and you can then check its production method. It is however unlikely that your studio will be using a product from a manufacturer that does not test on animals, therefore you should ask if you may take in your own preparation for spraying mid-tattoo. A simple one to make and use would be a few drops of lavender oil in a warmed distilled water. Remember you would need to bring your own spray bottle in too!

After-care Creams:

With regard to after-care creams, it seems that most of the usual ones recommended contain lanolin. To avoid this there are many other options,

Store bought, you could use Bach's Rescue Remedy Cream® or Lush's Ultra Balm®.

There are also many homemade salve recipes on the net, but one thing to bear in mind is that many salve recipes suggest the use of beeswax or Propolis - both of course bee products. Whilst some Vegans do not see Propolis as a problem (beeswax is listed as non-Vegan by the Vegan Society but Propolis is not as yet) - and certainly if you eat honey it would not be - others may be stricter and not happy with that. Propolis is a compound that offers a sort of waxy consistency and antiseptic to a salve - replacing this with an unrefined Cocoa Butter may work, but it would need some trial and error!

The simplest alternative, in my opinion, is a mix of Lavender oil & Shea butter - the Lavender brings the antiseptic, the Shea moisture. Mixing up a small batch would work, or you could even apply direct - Lavender first, Shea second. Please remember to use a carrier oil for the Lavender and not apply it directly to the area!

If you would rather use a salve you know, make sure it is moisturising as well as healing - it's important to not let your new tattoo dry out whilst it heals!

As time goes on I am sure more and more Vegan-safe products will flood the market – so do check with your tattoo artist *always* feel free to ask the questions you need to.

I hope this information is of some help to you - please feel free to share with credits/link-back!