
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2015

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Unlicensed Body Art Complaint is a Warning

“Scratchers” pose risk to public health

GRAND RAPIDS – A Grand Rapids man is the subject of an investigation being conducted by the Grand Rapids Police Department and the Kent County Health Department. He is accused of operating an illegal, unlicensed body art facility. The Kent County Health Department is taking this opportunity to remind you of the dangers that unlicensed body artists pose.

Tattoo parties or so-called “freelance home artists” (often referred to as “scratchers”) are operating illegally, and clients are exposed to a greater risk of disease or infection. Many legitimate artists work to get the word out regarding these illegal operators, often filing complaints with local police departments to shut them down. “The state law protects consumers by ensuring that artists receive specific safety training before performing body art procedures,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “Anyone receiving body art should know about the risk of transmission of diseases such as hepatitis and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), as well as severe bacterial infections that can cause permanent scarring.” Violators face a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 93 days in jail and/or a \$2500 fine.

The Kent County Health Department urges everyone to think about potential consequences. If you are considering body art, get the work done in a legal, licensed location. “We would like to thank the Grand Rapids Police Department for their work on this case,” says Shane Green, Supervising Sanitarian at the Kent County Health Department. “We know that there are other ‘scratchers’ out there. We hope that they get the message that what they are doing is illegal and dangerous, and it won’t be tolerated.”

The Kent County Health Department maintains an online reporting system for the investigation of illegal body artists. The printable form can be accessed [here](#). Because of the nature of this ongoing investigation, no further details of the alleged activity will be made public at this time.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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