

# [Mycobacterial tattoo infections](#)

Hipsters are hurting: [Tattoo infections in U.S. linked to contaminated ink](#)

Aug 22 (Reuters Health) – Contaminated tattoo ink caused at least 22 skin and soft tissue infections last fall in four U.S. states, according to an analysis released on Wednesday. [...]

The bacteria got into the containers when the manufacturer used distilled or reverse-osmosis water, which is not necessarily sterile. In the New York cases, which led to a recall by the Arizona-based manufacturer, the water was used to dilute black ink into various shades of gray.

The New York cases involved infection with a bug called *Mycobacterium chelonae*, which caused reddish or purple raised bumps in the areas tattooed with gray. The infection can mimic an allergic reaction and be difficult to treat.

“They were not getting better” with standard care, said Dr. Byron Kennedy of the Monroe County Department of Public Health in New York, the chief author of the New England Journal of Medicine study. “You had some folks who were on treatment for 6 months or more.”

I'm sure that all of those hipsters think that infection with a bug related to the one that causes tuberculosis and leprosy, as well as six months of antibiotic treatment, is a small price to pay so they can look hip.

[Tattoo ink also contains heavy metals](#), including mercury, cadmium, lead, antimony, nickel, chromium, and cobalt. The irony is that a lot of these tattooed folks probably shop at Whole Foods.