

# EU bans cancer threat chemicals in tattoo ink

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An EU ban on tattoo ink and permanent make-up containing chemicals feared to cause cancers or other health risks went into effect on Tuesday, officials said.

The prohibition covers [hazardous substances](#) such as certain [azo dyes](#),

carcinogenic aromatic amines, [polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons](#) (PAHs), metals and methanol.

"The restriction covers carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances, chemicals prohibited in cosmetics, skin sensitisers, skin and eye irritants, metal impurities, aromatic amines and some pigments," the European Commission said.

"The protection of public health of European citizens is our primary concern, and [hazardous chemicals](#) in [tattoo ink](#) can represent such a concern," a commission spokeswoman, Sonya Gospodinova, told journalists.

Seven EU countries have already applied the ban at national level: Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Slovenia and Sweden.

The regulation—agreed by all EU member states a year and a half ago—now makes it applicable across the 27-nation bloc, including for imports coming from outside the European Union.

A commission spokesman, Eric Mamer, said that safer substitute chemicals existed for use in most pigments and colourations.

"Where there are currently no substitutes there is a grace period so the industry has time to find alternative solutions," he said.

The European Chemicals Agency (ECA) said tattoo inks and permanent make-up contain chemical mixes that can be hazardous, causing "skin allergies and other more serious health impacts, such as genetic mutations and cancer".

It noted that ink pigments can seep into the body from the skin, affecting

organs such as lymph nodes and the liver—and that laser treatment to erase tattoos can break the substances into smaller particles that circulate in the body.

"As chemicals used in tattoo inks and permanent make-up may stay in the body for life, there is also the possibility for long-term exposure to the potentially harmful ingredients," it said.

The two main substances for which no substitutes are currently unavailable are synthetic beta-copper phthalocyanine dyes commonly used in tattoos: Pigment Blue 15:3 and Pigment Green 7.

German health authorities say both of those are feared to cause bladder cancer, although data is inconclusive.

The ECA said retailers and consumers would be unlikely to see price rises as a result of the EU ban.

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