

**NIAGARA, ERIE AND STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENTS WARN  
OF POSSIBLE BLOODBORNE INFECTION RISK FROM NIAGARA FALLS TATTOO ARTIST**

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (May 6, 2008)** – People who received tattoos from John Portik III of Niagara Falls should be tested for bloodborne diseases, announced the State, Niagara County and Erie County health departments today. A public health investigation has identified eight people who developed skin infections after receiving tattoos by Mr. Portik.

Mr. Portik has been tattooing approximately the past seven years in Niagara and Erie counties. Because of the skin infections, the Niagara and Erie county health departments issued cease-and-desist orders to prevent Mr. Portik from further tattooing. He also was fined and has surrendered his tattooing equipment to the Niagara County Health Department for violating the cease and desist orders.

Health officials do not know for sure whether Mr. Portik used proper infection control techniques to prevent transmission of bloodborne infections, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. There is no information that any of Mr. Portik's clients became infected with these diseases. However, because the health departments cannot be sure of the risk, if any, for transmission of these infections, they are recommending as a precautionary measure that any person who received a tattoo from Mr. Portik since approximately January 2001 be tested for all three infections.

Portik's clients who are seeking testing should contact their health care provider. If they do not have a health care provider or do not have health care insurance, they should call the Niagara County Health Department at 716-439-7470, or the Erie County Health Department at 716-858-2929, Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm for testing options. For information concerning this investigation, other than scheduling an appointment for testing, concerned members of the public may contact a call center at 1-800-808-1987.

Mr. Portik performed tattoos either at his home or in clients' homes. According to Mr. Portik, he was also employed for a short time at two former Niagara Falls tattoo studios known as Monsters Ink and Murder Ink. Mr. Portik also reported working in Erie County during 2004 and/or 2005 as an independent contractor for Hardcore Tattoo. Additionally, Mr. Portik reportedly performed tattoos at several home parties while associated with Hardcore Tattoo.

For information on tattoo health and safety, please visit the CDC Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/BodyArt/>. To learn more about tattoo risk associated with tattooing please visit the department's Web site at: [http://www.nyhealth.gov/community/body\\_art/](http://www.nyhealth.gov/community/body_art/). You may also obtain information at: <http://www.niagaracounty.com/health/> or <http://www.erie.gov/health/>.