

(continued from front page)

She later developed stroke-like symptoms and required heart valve replacement.

The medical literature documents many potential complications of body art, including excess bleeding, transmission of Hepatitis B and C, minor and severe bacterial infections, nerve damage, and keloid (thick scar) formation. Tongue and lip piercings are often associated with speech difficulties, bleeding, and tooth damage. The complications of tattoos include transmission of Hepatitis B and C, allergic reactions to pigments, and skin cancers. High ear piercings are often associated with bacterial infections, and navel piercings take a long time to heal. No documented cases of HIV transmission have been linked directly to body art, but a theoretical risk remains present nonetheless.

Body art can be particularly risky in people with inflammatory skin disease. Inflammatory skin diseases include such conditions as eczema, psoriasis, acne, rosacea, and pyoderma gangrenosum. Tattoo pigments have been found to contain lead, mercury, and arsenic. The ink does not contain standardized ingredients. Therefore, people with inflammatory skin diseases may experience hypersensitivity to the dyes.

People with eczema often suffer from associated environmental, food, and chemical allergies. Nickel is commonly found in inexpensive body jewelry, and nickel allergies are quite common. Nickel sensitivity can lead to allergic contact dermatitis and impressive local reactions to piercings, often manifesting as redness, swelling, peeling, and crusting.

With pyoderma gangrenosum, any skin trauma can lead to an increase in lesions. Piercings and tattoos would be contraindicated in these patients. Acne pimples are often infected with various skin bacteria. Piercing or tattooing acne-affected skin could lead to increased skin or systemic infections. Furthermore, tattooing or piercing already-inflamed, infected or broken skin is ill-advised.

Although there are many potential complications of body art, certain precautions can be taken to minimize infections and complications. First and foremost,



piercings and tattoos should be performed in a sterile fashion, preferably in a reputable tattoo or piercing studio. The body artist should wash his or her hands and wear gloves. The skin should be cleaned with alcohol or another antiseptic skin wash. All jewelry and needles used for piercing should be sterile and should NEVER be shared. The same is true for tattoo needles. All jewelry should be made of steel, titanium, or 14-karat gold.

The precautions don't stop there. Aftercare for piercings involves rotating the jewelry with CLEAN hands, removing crusts with alcohol, and avoiding trauma to the pierced area. Any redness, swelling, bleeding, oozing, fevers, or other signs of illness should be immediately reported to your physician or healthcare provider.

If you get pierced or tattooed and then "change your mind," know that piercings can be easily removed. A scar may, however, remain, and scarring can be worse in the presence of inflammatory skin disease. Tattoos can be removed with lasers, although this is a costly and painful process.

Express yourself! Body art is a very popular way to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Just be aware of the potential complications and risks involved. If you have questions or concerns, seek advice from your healthcare professional. Always make an informed decision before getting a tattoo or piercing.

*Dr. Berlin is a hospital-based pediatrician serving several hospitals in the Saint Petersburg, Florida area. Her main focus is taking care of medically complicated children at All Children's Hospital in St. Pete. She has no tattoos and only her earlobes are pierced.*

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## Scholarship Applications

The Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute is accepting applications for our annual college scholarship. Applications are available on line at [www.isdionline.org](http://www.isdionline.org) or by calling ISDI at 757-223-0795. Deadline for submission is: **February 1, 2008.**

Scholarships are available to college bound students who suffer with an inflammatory skin disease. Applications require a one-page essay on how you have been affected by skin disease along with a statement from your guidance counselor stating that you are a college bound student.

## how can I HELP?

Yes! I would like to help support the Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute (ISDI).

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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By donating to ISDI you will help us provide a ray of hope to people with inflammatory skin disease. An ISDIInformation subscription is given to all donors.

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Completed form and payment may be sent to: **Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute (ISDI)** P.O. Box 1074, Newport News, VA 23601

ISDI does not in any way endorse any of the drugs, products, or treatments reported in this newsletter. ISDI is not a medical authority and is reporting information with the sole purpose of keeping patients informed. No drugs, products, or treatments should be used without discussion with a physician.

## thank YOU!

ISDI is supported by corporate and private donations. We would like to thank the following donors (in alphabetical order):

ISDI acknowledges Novartis Pharmaceuticals for the nonrestricted grant that made this issue possible.

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a ray of hope through patient awareness and education



# ISDIInformation

Newsletter of the Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute

Volume 7 Number 2

## Body Art Can be Risky with Inflammatory Skin Disease

### Express Yourself: Health Issues in Tattoos and Body Piercings

Mr. G. is an 82-year old man who lost his mother and father in a hurricane that devastated the Cayman Islands in the 1940's. He gets a tattoo of a turtle with the words "Mother and Father" surrounding it.

Ellen is a successful pediatric dentist who enjoys sailing. She gets a tattoo of a sailboat on her lower back.

Jennifer is a 35-year old mother of two. After having her second baby, she has her navel pierced when she feels she has "gotten her groove back."

Body art, particularly tattooing and body piercing, has been part of many cultures for centuries. Piercing is one of the oldest known forms of body art. The oldest identified piercing is in a mummified man, estimated to be about 5000 years old. A tattoo has also been identified on a 2400-year-old Russian mummy. The pharaohs of ancient Egypt, Roman soldiers, Mayan warriors, and women in the Victorian era were adorned with body piercings.

In western civilization, tattoos and piercings have been considered taboo, possibly because the Old Testament of the Bible specifically prohibits marking or cutting the flesh (Leviticus 19:28 and Deuteronomy 14:1). Until approximately the 1960's, body art was associated with the fringes of society - hippies, bikers, and rock stars. Tattoos and piercings have become commonplace now, with professional executives, high school students, and even stay-at-home moms sporting tattoos and piercings below the neck. Piercings and tattoos now span adults and adolescents among many occupations and socioeconomic groups.

Those who choose to express themselves through body art do so for many reasons, including beautification, a rite of passage, fashion trends, rebellion, indication of age/social ranking, sexual stimulation, peer pressure, or membership in a specific group. Commonplace? Yes. Without complications? NO!!!

Consider the means by which tattoos are placed. The American Heritage Online Dictionary defines "tattoo" as a permanent mark or design made on the skin by a process of pricking and ingraining an indelible pigment. This is most often accomplished in a studio using a rapid-injection electrical device that punctures the dermal layer of the skin and injects pigment. Furthermore, piercing generally involves the insertion of sharp implements, such as needles, into the skin to create a hole through which jewelry can be worn. While earlobe piercing is the most common (and usually least risky) form of piercing, navel piercings are gaining in popularity. The lips, tongue, nose, eyebrows, nipples, and genitalia are also commonly pierced.

During my practice as a pediatric hospitalist, I have treated patients with major complications from piercings. One 14-year old girl pierced her own nipples at home. Several days later she developed a large abscess on one of her breasts. The abscess required surgical drainage and extensive post-operative wound care. She will eventually need reconstructive breast surgery. Another teenage girl had her navel pierced and several days later developed endocarditis, a severe and life-threatening bacterial infection of the heart.

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Newport News, VA 23601  
P.O. Box 1074

Newsletter of the Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute



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Comments and topic requests

may be sent to the editor:

c/o ISDI, P.O. Box 1074

Newport News, VA 23601

**Mission**

The goal of the Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute (ISDI) is to promote public awareness and enhanced treatment of inflammatory skin diseases through education, research, and patient advocacy.

**Director's Message**

Fall is in the air...and we know that could mean cool nights and windows open. Temperature changes can mean changes to our skin as well, so protect your skin.

It is an exciting time for ISDI. We are working with local, regional, and national institutions developing new programs. ISDI has an outstanding Scientific Advisory Board that continues to assist me in meeting the needs of patients. Our Board of Directors is

always available to offer support and guidance. Our joint effort with racecar owners Stuart and Peggy Hopkins continues to provide a greater awareness and a better understanding of what it is like living with an inflammatory skin disease. Most everyone one knows about car racing but few know about skin diseases. Thanks for their support and good luck in the "featured winners circle"!

LaDonna Williams  
Executive Director

**Letters to the Editor:**

Dear LaDonna Williams,

I am writing to let you and your readers know about this NEW Fruit Juice that has helped our family.

For over 15 years, my husband has been "dealing" with eczema on his hands. Over the years, he has tried several creams, medications, and even resorted to cortisone shots for temporary relief. He has eliminated several foods to avoid his triggers: tomatoes, peaches, strawberries, and chocolate.

Unfortunately, these are some of his favorite foods.

His hands were so bad; they would bleed and cause a lot of pain. He was unable to use his hands for several periods of time. His skin was so thin; they would burst open just from throwing a ball with our children. He started getting patches of eczema on his legs too.

A close friend introduced me to this fruit juice that she was taking for her health issues. She had great success and wanted to share it with us. I was reluctant and didn't believe the juice would help my family. XanGo mangosteen Supplement has improved my husband's condition to the point that his hands are softer than mine and it allows him to use his treatment creams and medicine more effectively.

The Original Patented Mangosteen fruit juice - has given us HOPE.

Sincerely, Lisa Okes  
Abingdon, VA  
(formerly of Williamsburg, VA)

Dear ISDI:

I am writing in response to a letter in your previous newsletter from the parent whose teenage son found relief from his back acne by wearing DermaSmart undershirts. My children have not worn the DermaSmart brand but they found that their back acne improved when they started wearing Under Armour tee shirts. I pay more for these, but they definitely help.

Thanks so much for such a great newsletter.

R.P.

Dear ISDI,

As a patient with highly sensitive skin, I have found the OBAGI products to be very helpful for my skin type. My physicians have been supportive. My plastic surgeon as well as my dermatologist have always emphasized the importance of quality skin care and OBAGI has served me well. I have been able to stop breakouts and have seen my sun damaged skin recover tremendously. Thanks to Sherry, my OBAGI consultant and ISDI I have learned how to manage my sensitive skin. Thank you.

S.O.

**Help GINA progress through the Senate  
Tell the Senate to take action on GINA!**

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, or GINA, (S.358) is on the verge of passing, after 12 long years! The House bill (H.R.493) passed 420-3 on April 25 and the Senate bill has been reported out of committee. We just need the full Senate to vote on the bill to get it to the President's desk!

Tell your senators to push for GINA to come to the floor for a vote! A list of senators and their contact information is available by going to the following website: [www.geneticalliance.org](http://www.geneticalliance.org) There is also a sample letter that you can see. Please take a few minutes to tailor the sample letter on your letterhead and fax it to the Senate. Feel free to insert personal

reasons for your support of the bill into the text.

There is power in numbers! Tell your friends, family, coworkers, and other members of your organization to take action now. We must make a big impact on this issue, and if every senator is contacted multiple times, we can make it happen!

**Get INVOLVED**

There are approximately 3,000 skin diseases that affect the skin. Skin disease does affect our economy and is responsible for a significant amount of absenteeism from work and school. Skin diseases affect not only the patient but family, friends and caregivers - 24/7. The burden of skin disease is real. If you, a friend or loved one suffer from skin disease, you too can help provide education and awareness by becoming involved. Talk or write to your local, state and national representatives. Educate them on how inflammatory skin disease affects men, women and children of all ages and races and can truly affect their quality of life. Be an advocate.

Working with the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), the Society of Investigative Dermatology (SID), the National Institutes of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin Disease (NIH), we can all become involved.

ISDI thanks Congresswoman JoAnn Davis, Republican, 1st District, for all of her support and involvement for raising awareness on inflammatory skin disease.

Let's not lose momentum. Let us help you help yourselves by getting involved.

**Expert ON CALL**

The Inflammatory Skin Disease institute welcomes questions from readers. Please call us at 757-223-0795; email: [Ruthann.newton@isdionline.org](mailto:Ruthann.newton@isdionline.org) and type "Expert on Call" in the subject; or write ISDI, P.O. Box 1074, Newport News, VA 23601 with your medical questions. ISDI will forward your questions to our "Expert on Call".

**Q:** If you get too much sun and start to peel, what is the best treatment? Is it ok for me to peel the already peeling skin or should I leave it alone?

**A:** Take cool baths (colloidal oatmeal) and minimize soap to the area. Avoid further sun. Use emollients to reduce dryness and peeling. Don't peel peeling skin, because this could tear normal skin. I don't prescribe anesthetic or antihistaminic creams because of risk of sensitization and subsequent allergic dermatitis.

Announcing our  
upcoming brochure:

**The FAQs  
About  
Psoriasis  
- in Spanish****Tasteless Comments**

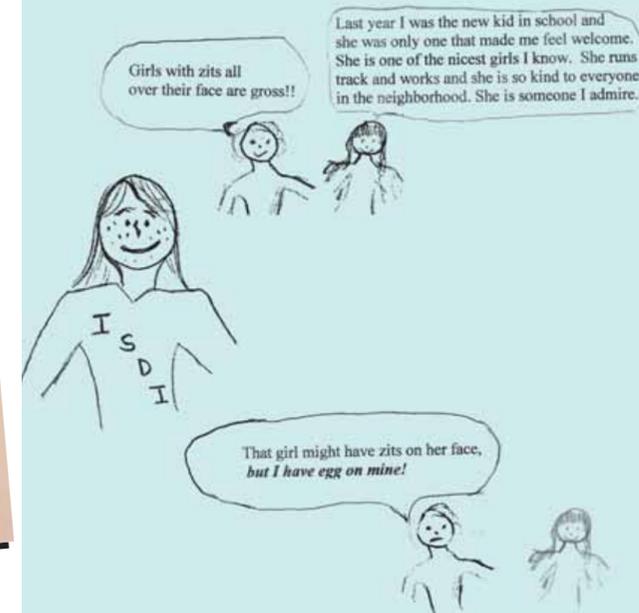
If you are a person with a skin disease, or the parent of a child with a skin disease, you have undoubtedly been faced with those rude, crude, and even well meaning people asking "those questions."

Do you have any snappy comebacks that you want so much to say, or actually have said? Send us your responses and you might see yours in print. Email: [Ruthann.Newton@isdionline.org](mailto:Ruthann.Newton@isdionline.org) Type in the Subject line: Tasteless Comments. Mail: Tasteless Comments, P.O. Box 1074, Newport News, VA 23601.

Editor's Note: The purpose of this section is three-fold: 1) it is an opportunity educate and make the public aware of the disorder; 2) it lets society know it is not appropriate to stare and ask hurtful questions, and 3) it is an opportunity to let off steam with a touch of humor, allowing us to laugh.

**LOOK WITHIN**

My teenage daughter is so self conscious about her acne. She was telling me recently that she overheard some girls making fun of her, but come to find out one of the girls stood up for my daughter and said some very kind things about her. This girl will never know how she helped my daughter's self esteem. Acne can and does affect the lives of teenagers. Thank goodness for a few kind people and ISDI!

**PENPALS**

Reach out to others and share challenges and triumphs in dealing with your disease. Patients often look to others in similar situations to discuss treatments, feelings, etc. The following readers have asked for their names to be presented as possible pen pals. If you are looking for support from someone who has the same disease as you, contact any of the readers listed below. Also, to be added to the list, send your name, address, phone, and/or e-mail to ISDI, P.O. Box 1074, Newport News, VA 23601 or [ExDirISDI@aol.com](mailto:ExDirISDI@aol.com).

**Rosacea**

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Sharing ISDI information at the All Children's Hospital Conference in Clearwater, Florida.