



# BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## News Release

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For Immediate Release

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### **Health Department Finds Possible Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure at Local Piercing Facility**

*Department working to notify customers and provide guidance on recommended blood testing*

(Berrien County, Michigan) – The Berrien County Health Department has identified unsafe and unsanitary piercing practices at a local body art facility, Paparazzi Tattoo & Body Piercing located in Niles, Michigan, that may have exposed former customers to the blood of other customers. The Berrien County Health Department has currently suspended the operating license for Paparazzi Tattoo & Body Piercing. As a precaution, customers who have ever received body piercings of their navel (belly button), tongue, nipples, genitals, and/or other surface or dermal piercings at Paparazzi Tattoo & Body Piercing through February 2020 are recommended to receive blood tests for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV.

Individuals who received these types of piercings may be at increased risk for possible exposure to bloodborne pathogens due to improper sterilization of metal forceps used for those piercing procedures. Customers who received ear and nose piercings exclusively are not at risk and are not recommended for blood testing. The Berrien County Health Department is working to notify individuals with records of having received the piercings in question to provide bloodborne pathogen testing recommendations and guidance. Individuals seeking testing are encouraged to visit their healthcare provider, but are also able to get tested at the Berrien County Health Department offices in Niles on Tuesdays and Thursdays or Benton Harbor on Mondays or Thursdays if they do not have a primary care provider.

While investigations are ongoing, to date, the Berrien County Health Department has not identified any cases of hepatitis C, hepatitis B, or HIV that are associated with practices or procedures at Paparazzi Tattoo & Body Piercing. People infected with viruses such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, or HIV may not have symptoms for many years. Even though there may not be symptoms, blood testing is still recommended as there are treatment options available if test results are positive for infection. Testing cannot determine where the infection occurred (at a body art facility or another location), but knowing about the infection is important so it can be evaluated by a health care professional.

The Health Department continues to work in collaboration with state and regional public health partners as this investigation is ongoing. A hotline has been established to answer questions or concerns from the public at 1-800-815-5485. More information is also available at the Berrien County Health Department website at [www.bchdmi.org](http://www.bchdmi.org).

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