

# **FIRST HAND FACTS ON FAINTING**

*by Susan Preston*

My “virgin husband” finally determined he was ready to venture out and get his first tattoo. Having no time in our normal lives we decided the best time to get one would be on the last day of our Hawaii vacation on the big island of Hawaii. We chose Rockwood’s Big Island Tattoo. Rockwood, who has been tattooing for 38 years, designed a gecko tribal armband for my husband and added some green pigment to the traditional tribal black. It’s fabulous.

While my husband was getting his tattoo, I talked to Rockwood about the insurance issues we have had with fainting. He advised situations where there could be problems:

- People who drink alcohol in any amount prior to getting tattooed are at a higher risk of passing out.
- People who have not eaten within a few hours of being tattooed are also at a higher risk.
- Anyone overly excited about getting a tattoo is a higher risk.

Rockwood says he would do the following:

- Keep the temperature of the shop low. Tattooing will naturally increase the client’s body heat, so after a few minutes the shop will seem plenty warm. Thus he likes to keep the temperature under 70 degrees to limit the possibility of a client fainting.
- If you think someone is heading in the direction of fainting (or they tell you they feel funny) get a wet paper towel to put on the back of the neck and SMALL amounts of water if they want any. If they get clammy and sweaty during the tattoo, there is an increased risk they could faint.
- If a client does pass out during the procedure the best thing to do is stop tattooing, hold onto the client as to not let them fall to the floor and talk to them constantly during their time out. Reassure them they are OK, as people tend to go to strange places in the mind. Tell them where they are and remind them they are getting tattooed. This way they are less likely to wake up swinging, as they can be confused as to what is happening to them when they wake up.

If there is an obvious physical issue as above or if the tattoo work goes over 1-2 hours, tell the client they must stay for 15 minutes after the tattoo to get their body processes back to where they normally are. Tell them they are required to stay this amount of time in these instances. If for some reason they don’t, the shop has gone on record with promoting this requirement.

If there is a friend or significant other with the newly tattooed person, it might be a good idea to tell them to be on the alert for the next few hours for light headedness especially if the tattoo took quite a bit of time or covered a lot of the body. I know this for a fact. After my brave husband patiently handled the 2 hour tattoo, without even a flinch, he fainted 3 hours later. People getting their first tattoo are often excited and stimulated by the experience and have an out-of-the-ordinary adrenaline rush. By being aware of this, all parties can help the newly tattooed person avoid any possible injury.

According to Rockwood, "Alan's passing out afterwards is generally associated with the brain realizing the torture is over and basically shutting down to reboot, as it were."

The only casualty in all of this was my arm. I had a slight bruise from catching my husband on his faint, which has meant it took me a bit longer to write this article.