

This Is Why Getting Stabbed With A Pencil Leaves A Mark For Years

You can call it a graphite tattoo, and just like a tattoo, there are ways you can remove or get rid of a pencil stab mark.



Lauren Strapagiel

BuzzFeed News Reporter

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Getting stabbed with a pencil can literally scar you for life.



Twitter: [@emmaafreitas](https://twitter.com/emmaafreitas)

And I'm not talking emotionally (but maybe that too). Recently, a bunch of people [shared photos on Twitter](#) of the marks left on their bodies from childhood pencil stabbing incidents.

It seems that, even decades later, there's still a mark left from the stabbing. But why?

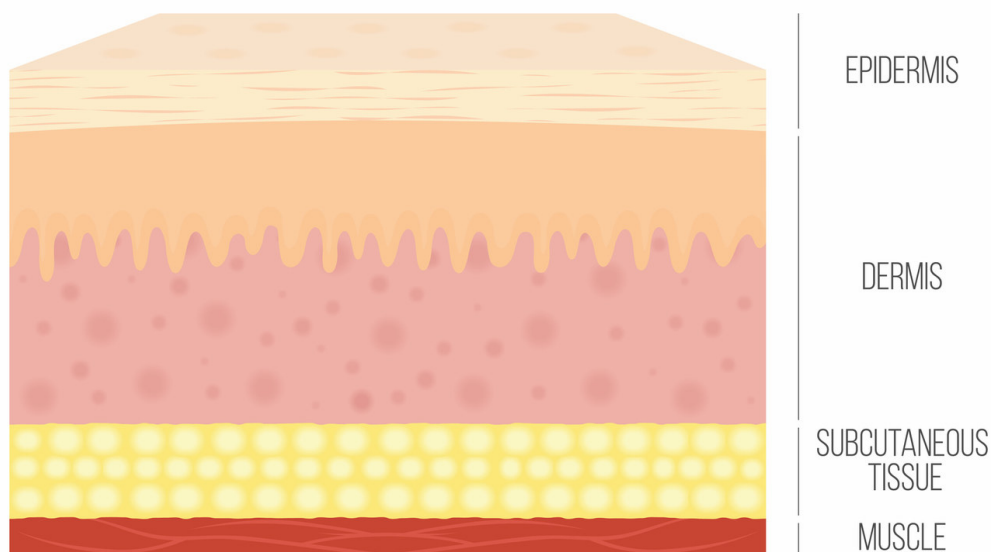
It turns out calling it a "pencil tattoo" is pretty accurate, according to Dr. Cameron Rokhsar, an associate professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. It's also a pretty personal issue for him.

"My cousin stabbed me with a pencil when I was 8 years old and I still have a mark," he told BuzzFeed News. For context, he's now 45.

The reason Rokhsar and so many others still have a mark is that a pencil stabbing leaves graphite particles in the dermis layer of the skin. That's the layer just below the outer epidermis layer.

"That's akin to ink from a tattoo," said Rokhsar. "It has to be inserted into the dermis and that's where tattoo ink is placed also."

THE LAYERS OF SKIN



Yevhenii Dubinko / Getty Images

Basically, it's an unintentional stick and poke tattoo. It's also not harmful, since pencils these days are made with graphite, not lead.

Just a reminder that lead is a toxic chemical that can contaminate water, usually from old pipes and housing materials, like lead-based paint. (Lead was banned in the US from paint used in housing in 1978, but it can still be found in older homes, soil in yards and playgrounds, drinking water, and other places in the environment.) However, pencils don't contain lead but graphite, a nontoxic mineral that's really just a type of carbon.

The only potential risk from a pencil stab is the wound caused by the stabbing itself.

“A pencil is a dirty object, so you’re puncturing the skin with a dirty object, so you could potentially get a bacterial infection,” said Rokhsar.

Like a regular tattoo, a pencil tattoo will fade a bit over time, but it can still be noticeable for decades.

Also like a tattoo, Rokhsar said the mark can be removed with laser treatment, or simply cut out.

With that mystery solved, the only question remaining is why so many kids are stabbing each other with pencils.