

Even if local legislation is more lenient, the following is an appropriate minimum standards policy on piercing minors: a parent or legal guardian must be present to sign a consent form. A state issued ID or passport is required from the parent or legal guardian, but identification required for a minor may vary. Be sure to contact your local studio to inquire about identification requirements for minors before going to the studio. **Under no circumstances is it appropriate to pierce the nipples or genitals of an individual under 18 years of age.**

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

Your instincts are a valuable tool, and you should listen to them when it comes to selecting a piercer. Trust your intuition and never stay in a situation that feels wrong. Don't act impulsively or be seduced by a low price as you generally get what you pay for.

CHECKLIST:

- Piercer is well trained and has continuing education Yes No
- Studio is clean and well organized Yes No
- Autoclave, either front-loading or cassette based Yes No
- Regular spore tests available, all passed Yes No
- All jewelry/tools sterilized in packages or autoclave cassette Yes No
- Needles sterilized, NOT soaked in liquid Yes No
- Sharps container mounted on wall Yes No
- Licenses/permits current (if applicable) Yes No
- Aftercare instructions provided, reflect current industry standards Yes No
- NO ear piercing guns Yes No
- All jewelry is internally threaded/threadless, well polished (NO external threads) Yes No
- Age requirements Yes No
- Portfolio/social media pictures look good, healed pics a bonus Yes No
- A wide selection of jewelry to ensure the proper fit Yes No
- I am treated with kindness and respect by the staff Yes No
- The piercer provides me with detailed written aftercare instructions Yes No
- BONUS: APP Membership (membership means 3-10 are covered) Yes No

PORTFOLIO & SOCIAL MEDIA

Look at the piercer's photo portfolio. Does the portfolio display a wide range of piercings showing the skillset of the piercer? Are piercings placed to accent the anatomy or do they look awkward and poorly matched to the individual? If the portfolio features unusual piercings, are there pictures of healed clients to show the viability of the placement?

EAR PIERCING GUNS

A number of states have made it illegal to use a piercing gun for any piercings besides the ear lobe, and with good reason. Most ear piercing guns can't be sterilized, and anyone being pierced by them is at risk. A reputable professional won't use a gun for any piercing - even for ear lobes.

THIS BROCHURE IS COURTESY OF THE APP &



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS
WWW.SAFEPIERCING.ORG • (888) 888-1APP

This brochure is not intended to endorse only APP member piercers, and its use does not imply membership in the APP. A current list of APP members can be found at safepiercing.org.

Disclaimer: These guidelines are based on a combination of vast professional experience, common sense, research, and extensive clinical practice. These suggestions are not to be considered a substitute for medical advice from a doctor.

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PICKING YOUR PIERCER



This brochure is brought to you by the Association of Professional Piercers (APP) to help you get a safe, clean piercing. Because it breaks the protective barrier of the skin, piercing has some health risks, including the potential to transmit an infection or bloodborne disease. As training required for piercers and regulation of piercing studios is inconsistent, you can't assume basic safety standards are in place in your area. Your safety is in your own hands, and you need to be an educated consumer. The information below can help. Members of the Association of Professional Piercers uphold the standards outlined in this brochure, and your piercer should too, even if they are not an APP member. Check out the following aspects of any prospective piercer and studio:

BODY JEWELRY

- When choosing body jewelry, especially for a fresh piercing, remember that the quality can affect the healing of your piercing.
- A wide selection of body jewelry is important. Body jewelry is NOT one size fits all!
- Jewelry should be made of implant-grade titanium or steel, solid 14k or higher gold or niobium.
- Jewelry should be internally threaded or threadless.
- Jewelry should be polished mirror smooth and should be free of nicks/scratches/burrs.
- See APP jewelry standards for more information.

PIERCER QUALIFICATIONS

Performing body piercing is not easy; it takes time and dedication to acquire the ability to safely and skillfully perform the procedure. Piercing is a hands-on profession that must be learned through practical experience, which generally involves trial and error. Sound instruction ideally involves a lengthy apprenticeship with a qualified mentor (though many piercers are self-taught). Ask how long they've been piercing and how they learned. Are they doing continuing education through classes or seminars? Your piercer should be willing to answer all your questions, provide an anatomical consultation, discuss jewelry options, what to expect during and after the piercing, as well as healing and aftercare. If you are not impressed with their qualifications, think twice about having them pierce you.

APP MEMBERSHIP:

APP Members should have a certificate posted in the studio. Check the expiration date to make sure it's current. Membership certificates are printed in vertical format, while those for attendance at our educational events are printed horizontally. For a list of APP members, check out our Member Directory at www.safepiercing.org. If you find a studio that claims to have an APP piercer and they are not on this list, please email info@safepiercing.org to let us know.

STUDIO ETIQUETTE

Individual studio requirements vary, but most will expect you to:

- Bring valid photo identification. If you are a minor, call your local studio to discuss additional requirements/identification before going to the studio.

- Be completely sober.
- Wear comfortable clothing that doesn't obstruct the piercing. For ear piercings, pull your hair back if possible.
- Have eaten within 4 hours.
- Avoid taking aspirin or other blood thinners.
- Have addressed potential health issues. (e.g., Some health conditions may require a doctor's note.)
- Avoid coming into the studio if you are showing symptoms of being sick.

AT THE COUNTER:

- Don't touch your piercings or handle your jewelry in the studio as this could potentially spread germs. Your piercer will be more than happy to assist you with removing or changing any jewelry already in your body.
- Worn jewelry should be sealed in a baggie or other container. Never place worn jewelry on the counter.

IN THE RESTROOM:

- Don't touch your piercings or change your jewelry in the bathroom to help prevent the spread of germs. Your piercer is more than happy to assist you.
- It is never appropriate to insert jewelry in the restroom or other area of the studio. If you want to have your jewelry changed, it should be done by studio staff in the piercing room.

IN THE PIERCING ROOM:

- Turn off or silence your cell phone.
- Before setting anything down, ask your piercer where personal belongings should be placed.
- Check with your piercer before taking photos or video.

STUDIO SET-UP & HYGIENE

The studio premises and the staff should be noticeably clean. Smoking or drinking alcohol should never take place there. If studio policy permits customers to try on piercing jewelry - run!

A studio should have five separate zones including a retail counter, waiting area, and:

- A public bathroom that is never used for cleaning contaminated piercing equipment.
- A separate room for performing piercing that has bright lighting and good ventilation. It should not be used for anything except piercing. Ideally it will contain a hand-washing sink for the piercer that is stocked with liquid soap and paper towels, not reusable cloth towels.
- A sterilization room (separate enclosure for processing contaminated tools and equipment). The public should not have access to this area.

Keep in mind that an all-disposable studio may not have a sterilization/processing area.

AUTOClave & SPORE TESTS

An autoclave is a necessary piece of equipment that uses steam under pressure to sterilize jewelry and other equipment used for piercings by killing germs and their spores. For piercing studios, sterilizers should be front loading and/or cassette based (such as a Statim). Top loading, "Dry Heat", and liquid soaks are not acceptable sterilization methods for piercings.

To ensure proper functioning of the sterilizer, studios should perform regular spore tests (biological indicators). The results should be posted publicly or are readily available for you to review.

PIERCING SET-UP

Ask if you can watch the piercer set-up for a piercing and be present in the room when they set up for yours. The piercer should first wash their hands then put on gloves. The needles, tools, and jewelry should be sealed in individual sterile packages and placed on a tray, or sterilized in a cassette. The piercer should change gloves if they touch anything in the room other than you and the sterile equipment. These packages/cassettes should be opened while you are present. Never let a piercer use a needle on you that was soaked in a liquid.

SHARPS CONTAINER

Each needle must be used to pierce only one client, and then be carefully discarded in an approved sharps disposal, a special container for contaminated (used) piercing needles. This is usually a small red box marked "biohazard," often mounted on the wall like in a doctor's office. If the studio doesn't have one, they may fail to dispose of needles properly, or even be re-using them.

LICENSING & PERMITS

In many cases, a studio with a license to operate meets minimum requirements and has passed some sort of inspection - though it may mean only that the owner has paid a fee to a city or state agency. To find out whether there are established standards and inspections in your area, contact your local health department. If a studio is operating unlicensed in a location where permits are required, report them to your health department and/or city business license division. A license does not guarantee that the piercer has received training to perform the job properly. Even in regions with the most stringent laws, there are usually no specific requirements regarding the abilities or education of the piercer.

AFTERCARE INSTRUCTIONS

Aftercare instructions should be provided for all piercings, preferably available for you to review on the studio website. While each studio will have their own personal spin on recommended care, it should be similar to the APP aftercare guidelines. Outdated care like antibacterial soap or ointment is a red flag. You should also receive written or electronic instructions when you come in for your piercing, and your piercer should explain them to you and answer any questions.

(CONTINUED ON THE BACK)