

These questions will help you pick your piercer and piercing studio. These are meant to be guidelines and can aid you in having a safe piercing experience.

### ✓ See their autoclave (sterilizer) and spore tests.

This is the most important thing you need to do when checking out ANY potential piercing studio. If they don't have an autoclave run away! ("Dry Heat" is NOT considered appropriate for sterilization.) Ask to see their spore test results. A spore test is the only way to know the autoclave is working properly. If they don't run regular spore tests, don't let them pierce you!

### ✓ Does the shop reuse needles?

This is one of the most important things you MUST check. Does the studio resterilize used needles? Make sure you see the piercer place the used needle in a sharps container. NEVER let a piercer use a needle on you that was soaked in a liquid. All needles should be in individual packages and should be opened while you are present.

### ✓ Does the studio seem clean?

Check it out! Is the piercing studio immaculate: the walls washed, carpet vacuumed? Are the staff bathed and neat? Is the restroom kept clean and tidy? If you feel they are not, walk out! Every good studio should have 5 separate areas: the counter, waiting room, piercing room(s), bathroom, and a separate sterilization room.



### ✓ Ask your friends where they got pierced.

Here are a few questions you should consider: Does their piercing look like a piercing you would want? Did they have any problems or infection during healing? Was the staff at the piercing studio able to help them if they had any complications? Would they get pierced there again?

### ✓ Use your instincts.

If you don't feel comfortable with the studio or the piercer you should leave. Repeatedly we hear "I should have listened to my gut feeling." So listen to it! If the studio seems more interested in your money than your health that is a sign to leave the studio quickly.

### ✓ Are they piercing with ear piercing guns?

If you are going to have a body piercing and the studio is using an ear gun, run away! Inform your health department! A number of states have made it illegal to use a gun on body piercings. Plastic ear guns can't be sterilized in an autoclave and therefore don't meet the criteria for APP Piercers' use of sterile disposable equipment.

### ✓ Ask questions of the staff and the piercer.

When responding to questions do they seem knowledgeable? It takes a long time to learn what jewelry is optimal for each piercing. It takes even longer to acquire the ability to correctly place and skillfully perform the piercing. Make sure the piercer is well-informed. Ask the piercer how long they have been piercing and how they learned. Check to see any certificates or plaques on the wall. Don't be misled into believing piercing is easy. Look at his or her piercings and peruse their piercing photo portfolio. Do you like what you see? If not, leave. You can be injured by a poorly performed piercing!

### ✓ Check the studio's jewelry selection.

There are lots of different types of piercings so there should be a variety of different types, styles and sizes of jewelry. The studio should not insist on a certain style because that is the only thing they have in stock! When referring to size of jewelry there are two measurements. One is the width (of a ring) or length (of a bar) called the "diameter" of the jewelry. The other is the thickness of the jewelry, which is the "gauge." As a general rule, jewelry no thinner than 14 gauge should be used below the neck. This is because of a likelihood of migration and cutting. The smaller the gauge number the thicker the jewelry.



### ✓ Do they have an aftercare sheet?

All professional studios should give you an aftercare sheet explaining how to take care of your piercing. Read this sheet BEFORE you have the piercing done! If it tells you to clean your piercing with ointment or hydrogen peroxide, the studio is clearly not keeping up with the industry standards and you should be concerned with the quality of piercing you would receive.

### ✓ Does the studio have a license to operate?

Many cities and states do require that the studio have a license. In most cases the license means that the studio meets minimum requirements and has passed some sort of inspection. To find out if your area has established standards and inspections, call your local Health Department. If the studio is illegally unlicensed do take the time to report them. Chances are they are not performing safe, hygienic piercings and could be endangering the health of piercees in your region.

### ✓ Check to see the studio's age requirements.

Many states have laws regarding the minimum age for piercing minors with parental consent. Even if the law allows it, many piercers feel certain piercings are not appropriate for minors. If the studio is more interested in making money than upholding sound morals and ethics use your judgment. Please understand the studio's right to enforce its own age limitations.

### ✓ See the piercing rooms and set-up.

Ask if you can watch them set-up for a piercing. Even better is to ask to observe a piercing being done. (Not all piercing studios will let people watch, but you can ask.) At least make sure you can see them set up for YOUR piercing. During preparation the piercer should first wash and glove their hands. The equipment should be sealed in individual sterilized packages and placed on a tray. The piercer should change gloves if they touch anything in the room other than you and the sterile equipment. If you are not satisfied with the set up, walk away!

### ✓ Is the studio recognized by the APP?

All APP Piercers will have a certificate that should be hanging on the studio's wall. The certificate has an expiration date on it; make sure it is current. For a list of APP Piercers you can check out our web site at [www.safepiercing.org](http://www.safepiercing.org) or call 1-888-515-4APP. If you find a studio that claims to have an APP Piercer and is not on this list please call and let us know.



# Taking Care of Your Piercing

The best aftercare will depend on various factors. Each body is unique and every piercing is different. There are a number of things you can do to help your body to heal your piercing. Some of them are:

## **Keep your hands off the piercing!**

Dirty (unwashed) hands are the worst enemy for piercings. During the course of a day your hands become covered with germs. If you touch the piercing, even just near the area, you will deposit bacteria at the piercing site, possibly causing an infection.

## **Eating correctly**

It is a proven fact that if you eat a healthful, balanced diet your body functions better and heals faster. You can also take vitamin C and zinc to help promote healing, in most cases.

## **Sea salt**

It is proven that if you apply a very mild, warm sea salt water soak (saline) to your piercing it can help your body to heal your piercing. It may also reduce the risk of an infection by helping remove bacteria from the area.

## **Liquid Soap**

It is widely accepted that a mild liquid soap used to gently wash the piercing followed by thorough rinsing is suitable for most piercings. Ask your piercer for suggestions on products that are available in your area. Usually once or twice a day works best; don't over-clean the piercing. Also, don't use multiple cleaners at the same time. (Salt water is ok.)

## **NEVER use the following things:**

### **Hydrogen Peroxide or Alcohol**

Over the years piercing industry professionals have learned that these products are far too strong and cause more problems than they help.

### **Antibiotic ointments, gels and creams**

These products trap dirt and germs inside a piercing and prevent oxygen from reaching the wound. They may work well for cuts and scrapes but are not good for piercings.

# What Is the APP?

The Association of Professional Piercers (APP) is an international health and safety organization. It is a nonprofit voluntary alliance dedicated to the dissemination of information about body piercing. Its Professional Business Members and Professional Members at Large are piercers who meet minimal guidelines for hygiene and safety. (Herein referred to as Piercers. Other categories of supporting members exist, but are not covered in this document.)

ALL APP Piercers uphold a set of safety and hygiene standards that are equal to, or more stringent than those established by state or local governments. The APP Piercer has at least one year of piercing experience, and all APP Piercers have knowledge of cross-contamination prevention, and appropriate sterilization.

The studios in which APP Piercers work all meet a rigorous standard of environmental criteria for health, safety, and sanitation. All APP Piercers undergo training and certification in CPR, and bloodborne pathogens and hold current first aid certification. Because many changes can occur in the industry during one year it is vital to keep current.

All APP Piercers must send in monthly spore test results for their studio's autoclave (sterilizer). This will allow you the comfort of knowing that measures are taken to safeguard your health.

The APP is a united group of piercing professionals which freely shares information to help fellow members and the public to get the best and most up-to-date information. This allows you the knowledge that you will be obtaining the safest piercing experience possible.

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This brochure is designed to help you in your search for a safe, clean studio. It is not intended to be used to endorse only APP piercers. It is also not intended to go against a physician's advice regarding bodily health.

Picking your Piercer...

You have decided to have your body pierced and you are asking yourself "I want it done now, so where do I go?" In this era of bloodborne diseases you MUST be very careful who you have perform your piercing!



The APP is a nonprofit organization dedicated to health, education, and safety of piercers and the public. This brochure will assist you in making a better-informed decision regarding your piercing because:

**IT'S  
YOUR  
CHOICE!**