

# Piercings

**Before having a piercing done**, you should find out all about the risks and possible allergic reactions. If you are in any doubt, talk to your family doctor.

**You should know the risks:** 17% of people that have piercings suffer complications:

- **Bleeding (4%).**
- **Infections (9%):** of the wound, abscesses, whole body infections (endocarditis and others).
- **Abnormal local inflammatory reactions: keloid and hypertrophic scars** (normally inflammation should not last longer than 1 or 2 weeks). Allergic **contact dermatitis**.
- **The parts of the body most at risk:**
  - **Ear cartilage:** up to 30% get infected, and sometimes wearers lose part of the cartilage.
  - **Penis:** narrowing of the urethra and strangulation of the glans.
  - **Clitoris:** infection, necrosis, scarring.

**The healing time** varies according to the part of the body:

- Ear lobe, tongue, genitals: from 4 to 6 weeks.
- Lip, eyebrow, nose or body: from 6 to 8 weeks.
- Between the eyebrows: from 6 to 12 weeks.
- Ear cartilage: from 8 to 12 weeks.

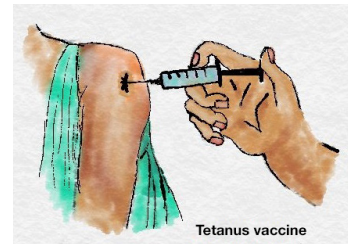
**The material used for the piercing should be surgical steel (it contains nickel), gold, niobium or titanium** (in accordance with current European guidelines) in order to avoid allergies.

**Piercings are not suitable** if you have:

- Hypertrophic scars or **keloids**. Allergies to piercing components (nickel).
- **An infection in the place where you want to have the piercing:** herpes, warts, a bacterial or fungal infection.
- **Skin conditions** like psoriasis, lichen planus, dermatographism, moderate-severe acne, melanoma.
- **Other diseases** like congenital heart disease, prosthetic heart valves, kidney failure, diabetes or immunodeficiency.
- **Pregnancy** (from the 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy onwards you should remove any nipple piercings. You can put them back in again 3 months after you finish breastfeeding).
- **Pharmacological therapies:** blood thinners, isotretinoin.

## Precautions:

- Make sure you are up to date with the **vaccination calendar**, especially with the tetanus vaccine.
- You should not have piercings done in summer (there is a higher risk of infection and photoallergic reactions).
- **The person that does the piercing** should first wash his hands, put on new gloves and should not touch anything apart from the necessary material. He/she should use sterile material. Perforation guns should be avoided.
- **The parlor** should be clean and have a wash basin. It must be registered with the Health and Consumer Department and have a local authority sanitary license. Townhalls usually have a list of parlors that comply with legislation.
- **Under 16's** must be accompanied by a responsible adult and need written permission from their parent or guardian.



## After having a piercing done:

- You should be given a **receipt** and **complaint forms** should be available for customers in case of need.
- **Skin care:** follow the instructions for as long as you are told to do so, which will be between 1 and 3 months depending on the part of the body. In general, you should **wash the area around the piercing** with saline solution or neutral soap, carefully moving the piercing 2-3 times a day. If it is in your mouth, rinse it out with antiseptic after eating, drinking or smoking.
- Try to **avoid:**
  - **The sun**, sunbeds, saunas, swimming pools and beaches for at least 2 weeks.
  - Using **cosmetic creams, spermicides or lubricants in the area around the piercing**.
  - **Friction in the area** until it has completely healed.
- **You should remove the piercing if** there is a skin allergy or infection, an abscess, a keloid scar, pain or skin damage on the cartilage, frequent urogenital infections, if the tongue is very swollen or the swelling lasts for a long time.
- **If you have a fever** or the skin **inflammation** lasts more than 2 weeks even though you follow the care instructions, you should see your family doctor.