

## APP MEMBERSHIP

APP Members should have a certificate posted in the studio. Make sure the expiration date on it is current. For a list of APP members check out our member locator at [safepiercing.org](http://safepiercing.org) or call our office at 1-888-888-1APP. If you find a studio that claims to have an APP piercer and is not on this list, please call or email to let us know.

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

- Bring valid photo identification, even if you are clearly over the age of majority
- Be completely sober
- Be bathed with hair trimmed or tied back (where applicable)
- Wear suitable, clean garments/underwear (where applicable)
- Have eaten within 4 hours
- If possible, avoid taking aspirin or other blood thinners
- Have addressed potential health issues, e.g., if you require antibiotics prior to dental work, see your doctor before being pierced

## BODY JEWELRY

When choosing body jewelry—especially for a fresh piercing—remember that the quality can drastically affect the health and healing of your piercing.

- A large selection of body jewelry is important. A studio carrying only a handful of styles or sizes will be unable to meet the needs presented by the wide range of human anatomy.
- The surfaces and ends of body jewelry must be smooth, free of nicks, scratches, burrs, and polishing compounds, and metals must have a consistent mirror finish.
- APP members use only internally threaded jewelry for initial piercings. This means that any screw threads used in closures are on the removable end, such as the ball or spike—not on the shaft of the jewelry. Passing exposed threading through the skin can cause unnecessary trauma. For detailed information on body jewelry, including suitable materials, see the APP's brochures: *Jewelry for Initial Piercings* and *Jewelry for Healed Piercings*.

## STUDIO ETIQUETTE

### AT THE COUNTER:

- Don't handle your piercings (even if they are healed) or jewelry as you may spread germs to the studio's common areas, endangering staff and fellow patrons.
- Bring previously worn jewelry in a baggie or other sealed container; never place used jewelry on the counter.

### IN THE RESTROOM:

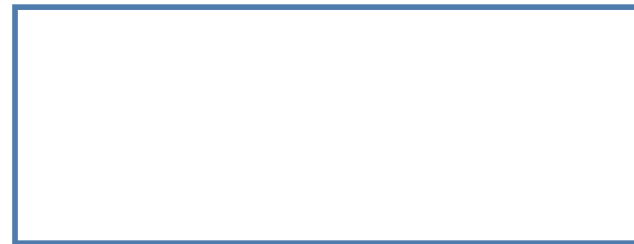
- Don't handle your piercings or jewelry (see "Studio Etiquette").
- It is never appropriate to insert jewelry in the restroom or other area of the studio. If you want to have your jewelry changed, it should be done by studio staff in the piercing room.

### IN THE PIERCING ROOM:

- Turn off your cell phone. Before setting anything down, allow your piercer to direct you to the area where personal belongings should be placed.
- Camera flashes can be very distracting during a piercing procedure, so check with your piercer before taking pictures.

Text from *The Piercing Bible* by Elayne Angel, [www.piercingbible.com](http://www.piercingbible.com)

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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](http://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 (such as hepatitis). There are no standardized piercing regulations in the United States; legislation varies from state to state, and it is often different from one county to the next. In many cities, even minimal laws do not exist; in others, regulations are not enforced or they are ineffective. 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 he or she is not an APP member. Check out the following aspects of any prospective piercer and studio:

## 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). It is advisable to inquire how long your piercer has been piercing, how they learned, and what they do to keep their knowledge-base current—such as taking continuing education courses on anatomy, aftercare, aseptic technique, etc.

Your potential piercer should earn your trust by demonstrating knowledge and competency. Before taking your money, a piercer should be willing to provide a consultation to inspect your anatomy, discuss jewelry selection, the procedure, potential risks and complications, the healing process, and aftercare guidelines. If you are not impressed with their qualifications, think twice about having them pierce you.

## STUDIO SET-UP AND 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 or an air dryer, not reusable cloth towels.
- A sterilization room (separate enclosure for processing contaminated tools and equipment). The public should not have access to this area.

## AUTOCLAVE (STERILIZER)

An autoclave is a device that sterilizes the jewelry and equipment necessary to perform piercings by eliminating germs and their spores. No studio should be in operation without this vital piece of equipment! The most common units in body art studios use a combination of steam and pressure. “Dry Heat” or liquid soaks are *not* considered suitable for sterilization. A Statim is a rapid-cycle autoclave that may also be used in a piercing studio.

## SPORE TEST RESULTS

Spore tests (biological indicators) provide proof that an autoclave is working properly. They test the autoclave’s ability to kill even the most dangerous and resistant organisms including hepatitis. The studio should keep recent results on file and be willing to show them to you. Good piercers will be impressed, not annoyed, when customers are informed and interested enough to ask about spore test results.

## PIERCING SET-UP

Ask if you can watch the piercer set-up for a piercing and be present in the room when he or she sets up for yours. The piercer should first wash and glove his or her hands. The needles, tools, and jewelry should be sealed in individual sterile packages and placed on a tray. The piercer should change gloves if he touches anything in the room other than you and the sterile equipment. These packages should be opened while you are present. **Never** let a piercer use a needle on you that was soaked in a liquid. A piercer using a Statim may work directly from the sterile cassette (rather than use packaged tools).

## 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 AND 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, call 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 is usually no specific requirements regarding the abilities or education of the piercer.

## AFTERCARE INSTRUCTIONS

The guidelines you will need to follow to care for your piercing should be explained to you verbally **and provided in writing**. Read this sheet **before** you have the piercing done! If you are advised to treat your piercing with harsh soap, ointment, alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide, the studio is not keeping up with industry standards. (For current APP aftercare suggestions, see our brochures: *Suggested Aftercare Guidelines for Body Piercings* or *Suggested Aftercare Guidelines for Oral Piercings*, or visit [safepiercing.org](http://safepiercing.org).)

## AGE REQUIREMENTS

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. Proof-positive, state-issued photo identification is required from the legal guardian, and a *bona fide* form of identification from the minor. In the event the parent has a different last name and/or address from the child, court documentation is needed to prove the relationship—i.e., divorce or adoption papers, or a marriage certificate. Under no circumstances is it appropriate to pierce the nipples or genitals of an individual under 18 years of age.

## PORTFOLIO

Look at the piercer’s photo portfolio. 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.

## 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. This isn’t a haircut; your health is at stake.

## USE YOUR HEAD

Don’t act impulsively or be seduced by a low price. You generally get what you pay for (though some unskilled piercers charge plenty). Get referrals on a piercing studio and piercer from knowledgeable friends and/or the local health department.