

EAR LOBE PIERCING SERVICES

Information for the general public

Porcupine Health Unit, Public Health Inspection Services, Infection Control

NOTE: This information is provided solely for your convenience and to increase awareness about the services you receive. This information is not intended to be legal or medical advice. If you have medical questions arising from care you have received, speak with your doctor. If you have legal concerns about any ear lobe piercing services, consult a lawyer.

Ontario consumers have the right to expect clean, safe services when having their ear lobes pierced. Anytime the skin is pierced, bacteria and viruses can easily enter the body. You can get HIV, hepatitis B and C and other infections. You do not have to see blood or body fluids on needles, equipment or surfaces for an infection to occur. Make sure the provider you're dealing with has made both hygiene and appropriate sterilization or disinfection of equipment high priorities for their business. **Ear piercing instruments can only be used on the fleshy part of the ear.**

What to look for and ask:

- Make sure you go to a business that has been inspected by Public Health staff. Ask to see the most recent inspection report or call your local public health unit for more information. Under Ontario's 2008 Infection Prevention and Control in Personal Service Settings Protocol, inspections should take place annually, and more frequently if in response to complaints.
- The business must be clean and well lit.
- The business must have a sink with liquid soap and paper towels to wash and dry hands.
- The worker must wash their hands before they touch you and must use a new pair of disposable gloves when piercing your ears.
- You have the right to ask the worker to explain how they clean and disinfect their equipment before the service begins.
- If you have any doubts, LEAVE. Your body and health may be at risk.
- Before piercing, your ear lobe must be disinfected with antiseptic solution. Antiseptic solutions are chemical agents that destroy microorganisms on human skin. Some examples include solutions of at least 70% isopropyl alcohol or iodine based solutions such as betadine.
- The worker should use the ear piercing instruments on the fleshy part of your ear lobe only.
- Sterile, pre-packaged jewellery must be used for your ear lobe piercing. All items that contact your ear should be sterile and disposable.
- Jewellery should not be touched when loading it into the piercing instrument.
- The jewellery should not be sprayed with anything before it's used on you.
- You should receive verbal and written instructions on how to take care of your piercing.
- If the skin around your ear piercing becomes painful, red, or inflamed, see a doctor.
- If you have any concerns, contact your local public health unit.

Source: MOHLTC, Public Health Division, January 2010

**For more information,
contact your local
health inspector
or call 1-800-461-1818.
www.porcupinehu.on.ca**

