



ASK PIERCING QUESTIONS ABOUT BODY PIERCING

The AMA today urged Australians considering undergoing body piercing to ensure that they are aware of the health risks associated with the procedure and what they can do to reduce the chances of something going wrong.

AMA Vice President, Dr Steve Hambleton, today launched an AMA youth health brochure that provides advice about the risks associated with piercing including the factors and questions people should consider before having a body piercing.

“Summer is a popular time for some young people to undergo piercing. However, doctors sometimes see some serious negative health effects from body piercing,” Dr Hambleton said.

“Piercing is not a simple procedure, and it is also not always a safe procedure.

“There are significant risks of diseases such as hepatitis B and C and HIV/AIDS being transmitted in unsafe piercing studios or when piercing is done by unqualified friends or relatives in non-sterile conditions.”

Other risks involved in piercing include:

- Infections which can result in blood poisoning, toxic shock syndrome and blocked airways;
- Severe scarring;
- Complications from tongue, lip and cheek piercing causing speech impediments, breathing problems, increased tooth decay, and broken teeth;
- Unsightly skin bridges from umbilical piercing after subsequent pregnancy; and
- Nipple piercing in women creating scar tissue that may cause problems with breastfeeding in later life.

“Despite these possible health outcomes, many people still choose to undergo piercing. It’s important that they know how to reduce the risks involved,” Dr Hambleton said.

“There are a number of questions people should ask before deciding to have a procedure in a piercing studio.

“Many studios use prepackaged sterilised equipment. If so, make sure everything that is used to penetrate your skin is in sealed bags and opened in your presence. If the equipment is not prepacked, it is important to find out whether the piercer uses an autoclave sterilisation unit. Only an autoclave ensures appropriate sterilisation.

“The studio should be clean. If you think the studio is not up to standard, then trust your instinct and do not get a piercing there. Don’t be afraid to ask the piercer some questions about their skills and experience and ensure you know everything about the procedure you are considering.”

Dr Hambleton encouraged people considering having a piercing to seek advice from their doctor.

“Your doctor can discuss the risks with you, tell you how to make sure a piercing studio is safe, and show you how to care for your piercing and what to do if something goes wrong,” he said.

“Some doctors are happy to do piercing for their patients in a clean, safe and sterile environment.”

The AMA brochure *Ask some piercing questions* is available online at <http://www.ama.com.au/node/5286>

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