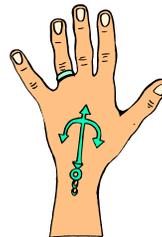


**If you decide to have a tattoo or body piercing, never tattoo or pierce your own body or let a friend do it because of potential complications.**

Body piercing is a big decision. After understanding the risks, we hope that this information will help you make a decision that's best for you. Please follow the guidelines in this brochure. Go to a reliable salon/piercer, buy good jewelry, keep the site clean and away from irritating material. If you have questions concerning body piercings and tattoos or want to know of a reliable body piercer, feel free to contact Eddie Mace or W.E. Hill at the Craven County Health Department.



**Tattoos Too!**

*Log on to :[www.cravencounty.com](http://www.cravencounty.com) and go to the Food & Lodging web page for additional information.*

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**Craven County  
Health Department**

## **Tattooing & Body Piercing**

**Working  
Together For  
Your Health.**

**DIVISION OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**



# History of Tattooing & Body Piercing

Throughout history, tattooing and body piercing have been practiced by many cultures. The body of a 4,000 year old tattooed man was discovered in a glacier on the Austrian border in 1992. Egyptians in the period from 4000-2000 B.C. identified tattooing with fertility and nobility. During the 17th and 18th centuries, European sailors traveling through the Polynesian island saw extensive tattooing on both men and women. Since the 5th century B.C., the Japanese have used tattooing for ornamental, cosmetic and religious purposes as well as for identification and punishment of criminals. In the late 19th century, tattooed royalty in England and European countries were fashionable.



Body piercing was often identified with royalty and portrayed courage and virility. Egyptian Pharaohs pierced their nipples to show their manhood and Mayans pierced their tongues as a spiritual ritual.

## What are the risk of body piercing?

The most serious risk are infections, allergic reactions, bleeding, and damage to nerves or teeth. Hepatitis, HIV, tetanus, bacteria, and yeast may cause infections. If the piercer is licensed, washes his/her hands and uses gloves and sterile equipment and you take good care of your piercing, the risk of infection is lowered, but still exist.

Another cause of problems from piercing is the wrong kind of jewelry for the area pierced. If the jewelry is too small, it can actually cut off the blood supply to the tissue, causing swelling and pain. If the jewelry is too thin or too heavy or if you are allergic to the metal, your body can sometimes reject the jewelry (your body reacts against the jewelry because it is a "foreign object.').

## What should I look for in a Piercing salon?

When you go into a salon, look around. Is the place clean? Are they licensed? The shop should be clean and sanitary. The lighting should be good so the piercers can see well while working. Do they wash their hands and use sterile gloves and instruments? All the instruments should either be brand new and disposable or be in sterilized pouches. If the piercer uses disposable needles, you should see him/her open sealed packages of the needles. The piercer should throw away the needles in a biohazard container after using them.

## What kind of jewelry should I buy?

It is best to use surgical stainless steel when you first have your piercing done. It is least likely to produce a

foreign body reaction or infection in the skin.

## How are piercings done?

An experienced piercer uses a hollow needle to create a hole by passing the needle through the body part you want pierced. The body jewelry is then inserted through the hole. Sometimes there can be a small amount of bleeding. You should not take aspirin or any pain medication that contains aspirin the week before any piercing is done, since these medicines may cause you to bleed a little bit more than usual. **NEVER USE A PEIRCING GUN BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE STERILIZED PROPERLY.**

## How should I clean my new piercing?

- Wash your hands with soap and water before touching or cleaning the pierced area. Don't let anyone else touch the pierced area until it is healed.
- Remove any crusty skin from the site and from the jewelry with warm water.
- Gently wash the area around the piercing with liquid antibacterial soap.
- Gently rinse off all of the soap and crusty discharge.
- Gently dry the area with a paper towel.