

Advertisement

It's for people

Together Rx
Access
Prescription Savings Program

00000 0000
MEMBER NAME

FREE TO GET. FREE TO USE

- NEWS
- POLITICS
- OPINIONS
- LOCAL
- SPORTS
- ARTS & LIVING
- CITY GUIDE
- JOB
- CARS
- REAL ESTATE
- RENTALS
- CLASSIFIEDS

SEARCH: go washingtonpost.com Web : Results by Google | Search Archives

washingtonpost.com > Health > Women

- Print This Article
- E-Mail This Article

Page 2 of 3 < Back Next >

The Hole Truth

"I sort of became an expert by default," said Meltzer, author of a widely cited article about the complications of body piercing published last year in the journal *American Family Physician*.

Meltzer, who said she is "neither for it nor against it," said she believes many patients don't appreciate the risks of piercing -- or realize that it leaves a permanent hole in the skin that doesn't close even after jewelry is removed. Most piercings are performed with a needle and without anesthetic, although sometimes a topical numbing agent such as lidocaine is used.

Doctors say that while pierced earlobes sometimes become infected, other sites are more often prone to complications because they tend to be subjected to friction or continuous moisture, which can contribute to the growth of bacteria. In other areas, such as the cartilage in the upper ear, the lack of blood vessels can retard healing. And the mouth is teeming with bacteria.

Meltzer said she is particularly concerned about the lack of sterility in some tattoo parlors, where many piercings are performed; the proliferation of teenage "piercing parties" where booze is used as an anesthetic; and, in most states, the lack of regulation of an invasive procedure capable of transmitting HIV and other blood-borne diseases. (The District has no regulations governing piercing, officials say. Virginia prohibits piercing of minors without parental consent, while neither Virginia nor Maryland requires routine inspection of shops performing piercing.)

John Rowan, a registered nurse who owns Rendezvous Tattoo and Body Piercing, one of at least five such shops in Blacksburg, Va., home of Virginia Tech, said he thinks the dangers are exaggerated.

"I don't think there have to be any medical risks at all if it's done correctly," said Rowan, who charges \$50 for a nostril piercing -- one of the most popular adornments -- and has several piercings himself. "You've got to remember that the medical community only sees the downside. For every one infection they see, there are 1,000 that are trouble-free. Nobody comes into the ER to tell you

- MOST VIEWED ARTICLES**
- Health [On the Site](#)
 - Updated 1:31 p.m. ET
 - [Conjoined Twins' Surgery Halted in Ohio](#)
 - [Study: Vitamin D Reduces Cancer Risk](#)
 - [House Votes to Ease Limits on Stem Cell Research](#)

- E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS**
- View a Sample and Sign Up
 - [Lean Plate Club](#)
 - [Manage Your Newsletters](#)

Enlarge This Photo Buy This Photo



When Marymount University student Alicia Funderburg, 18, had her tongue pierced last year, the 10-second procedure didn't hurt. But soon she experienced swelling and pain that lasted for a few weeks. (Susan Biddle - Twp)

GRAPHIC



The Price of Piercing

While body piercing has increased in popularity and social acceptance, long healing time, infections and scarring can plague those who pierce.

JOBSEARCH



Your Co-Workers Like McSteamy?

We can help you find the right work environment with competitive benefits.

Nursing, Allied Health: [Get a New Job](#)

WHO'S BLOGGING?

Read what bloggers are saying about this article.

- [BME IAM community](#)
- [bookofioe](#)
- [The Cranky Professor](#)
- [Full List of Blogs \(16 links\) »](#)

Most Blogged About Articles
[On washingtonpost.com](#) | [On the web](#)

POWERED BY **Technorati**

SAVE & SHARE ARTICLE [What's This?](#)

- Digg
- Google
- del.icio.us
- Yahoo!
- Reddit
- Facebook

Advertisement

welcome to the human network. CISCO

Advertisement

Rearrange your thinking about cholesterol.

Advertisement

FEATURED ADVERTISER LINKS

- [Refinance Rates As Low As 2.9% - FREE QUOTES! \\$300,000 Mortgage for \\$965/mo! Refinance & Save \\$1,000's!](#)
- [Be Prepared. Fight Identity Theft! Equifax.com.](#)
- [\\$599,000 Loan for only \\$1.997/mo. NO SSN REQUIRED!](#)
- [Asbestos, Mesothelioma Lawyer, Lung Cancer, Med Mal](#)
- [Father's Day Gifts, T-shirts, Custom Hats, Koozies](#)
- [Cool Gadgets, Great Deals, Visit CircuitCity.com](#)
- [Try Email Marketing with Constant Contact](#)
- [T-Mobile, Verizon Wireless, Cingular/AT&T Phones](#)

how great their piercing is."

Rowan, who said he has pierced the navels of girls as young as 12 who were accompanied by their parents, said he thinks more regulatory oversight is needed. Many piercers, noted Rowan, a member of the nonprofit Association of Professional Piercers, learn the craft by apprenticing at a studio. And in Virginia, he notes, body piercers come under the jurisdiction of the board that regulates barbers, not the health department.

Fashion Statement

Lax regulation and potential risks were not uppermost in the mind of 19-year-old Sarah Mutnick, a sophomore at George Mason University, when she had her navel pierced at 17 in a nail salon near Potomac Mills Mall. After developing an infection caused by friction from her spandex high school field hockey uniform, she removed the jewelry. She got her second navel ring for her 18th birthday.





Body piercing, Mutnick said, is "a fashion statement -- something for the here and now -- not when I'm 30." Among her friends and classmates, she said, it is widely accepted and popular among the sorority girls at her school. Her boyfriend had a tongue stud, she said, her roommate just got her nose pierced, and her older brother wears an earring.

Mutnick said her parents were not opposed to her navel ring, "but my grandma doesn't understand it. She said, 'Didn't it hurt?'" Mutnick, who also has multiple ear piercings, said the major discomfort she experienced occurred when she caught the ring on her car trunk.

"I fell on the ground crying" because the pain was so intense, she recalled.

Alicia Funderburg, 18, said she decided to have her tongue pierced last year while attending John F. Kennedy High School in Montgomery County. She didn't go to a studio, but arranged with a friend to have a man who had pierced many of their classmates do it at a friend's home.

< [Back](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [Next](#) >

 Print This Article	 E-Mail This Article	 Permission to Republish
More on washingtonpost.com <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ STATE ETHICS ENFORCEMENT: Appellate Court Rules Against Bereano▪ EU Warns of Obesity Crisis▪ Military Service May Be Connected to ALS <p>» Related Topics & Web Content</p> <p>powered by </p>	People who read this also read ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Harnessed The Political Power of Evangelicals▪ I Lost My Son to a War I Oppose. We Were Both Doing Our Duty.▪ Books Paint Critical Portraits of Clinton▪ Dan Froomkin - Fitzgerald Again Points to Cheney	

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

© 2007 The Washington Post Company

Ads by Google
Careers in DC, VA, and MD Free Custom Job Fit. Easy, Secure, Confidential. Employers Find You. www.jobfox.com
Body Jewelry Free Shipping On Orders Over \$25 Wholesale Prices. Shop Now! www.bodycandy.com
FreakRings.com Great selection of tongue rings starting at 99 cents. FreakRings.com

SEARCH:  [washingtonpost.com](#) Web : Results by 

[NEWS](#) | [POLITICS](#) | [OPINIONS](#) | [LOCAL](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [ARTS & LIVING](#) | [CITY GUIDE](#)

[JOBS](#) | [CARS](#) | [REAL ESTATE](#) | [RENTALS](#) | [CLASSIFIEDS](#)

[washingtonpost.com: Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertisers](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Make Us Your Home Page](#) | [mywashingtonpost.com](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Mobile](#) | [RSS](#) | [Archives](#)
[The Washington Post: Subscribe](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Advertisers](#) | [Electronic Edition](#) | [Online Photo Store](#) | [The Washington Post Store](#) | [About The Post](#) | [National Weekly](#)
[The Washington Post Company: Information and Other Post Co. Websites](#)

© Copyright 1996-2007 The Washington Post Company | [User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#) | [Rights and Permissions](#)