



Body piercing—your health

Find out what you need to know before you
have a body piercing

June 21

Do you want a body piercing?

It is your skin—do you know the risks? This leaflet aims to help you make the right and safe choices when deciding to have a body piercing.

What should I think about?



Think about it carefully and do not rush into any decisions.

Always use a licensed, qualified and experienced piercer and check that they are using safe practices. This guide will help you understand what to look for.

What can go wrong?

Your skin acts as a natural barrier — piercing the skin can lead to:

Pain, Bleeding and Swelling Using a good and experienced piercer will minimise the risk of this. Damage to teeth and gum recession are also risks with mouth piercings.

Localised Infection This is where the wound becomes infected with bacteria and it can happen when you have been pierced in unhygienic conditions. It can also occur if your aftercare is poor and you do not keep the piercing clean.

Infectious Disease There is a risk of contracting bacterial infections such as Tetanus and serious and incurable bloodborne viruses including Hepatitis (B or C) and HIV. The number of cases of Hepatitis has risen dramatically over the past few years and many people may not have symptoms or even realise that they are infected. A reputable piercer will have had the vaccine for Hepatitis B.

Allergic reactions Let the piercer know if you are allergic to anything. For example latex, nickel or other metals, or the cleaning and disinfecting chemicals which may come into contact with your skin. **If you are concerned about any of the above problems contact your GP for an urgent appointment or call 111.**



How old do I need to be?

There is no legal minimum age for body piercing, however responsible piercers will ask for parental consent if you are under 16 years of age.

Piercing of the nipples and genitalia of both sexes under the age of 16 are prohibited.

If you need more information on age and piercing contact Licensing on 020 8359 7443 Email: licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk

Before getting a piercing

Before you have your piercing done you should be asked to fill out a consent form. This will ask you for your name, address, and age. You may be asked to prove your age, so it's a good idea to have some form of identification on you.

The consent form should also have a list of medical conditions on it. If you have, or have had, one of these you should consult a doctor before getting the piercing done. It is not advisable to have a piercing, if you are under the influence of drink or drugs, unwell or have recently used a sunbed.

Are they licensed?

Anyone who carries out body piercing in L.B. Barnet must be Licenced by the Council. They should display their licence where their customers can see it. A Licenced practitioner has been inspected by an Environmental Health Practitioner to make sure that they operate in a strict hygienic manner and meet the requirements of the local licencing conditions. You can report concerns about social media accounts, such as an Instagram handle or Facebook page, that may be violating the law in respect of piercing to the Licensing Team.

If you cannot see the certificate displayed then you are advised to **LEAVE** the premises. You can always check with Barnet Licensing Team before attending to check if it is licensed and has been inspected.

Tel: 020 8359 7443

Email: licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk

Are they using clean needles?

All piercing must be done with a new, clean, pre-packed needle, which you should see being opened in front of you. Never let a needle be used on you that has been taken out of a liquid. Remember, using dirty needles is the biggest cause of an infection in a piercing and it is you who will suffer.



Body Piercing

it is your skin—know the risks

Watch out for...

Aftercare

Your piercing might be infected if:

- the area around it is swollen, painful, hot, very red or dark (depending on your skin colour)
- there's blood or pus coming out of it – pus can be white, green or yellow
- you feel hot or shivery or generally unwell

Seek urgent medical advice contact your GP or call 111
[Infected piercings - NHS](#)
www.nhs.uk

Once a piercing has been carried out you should be told how to look after it and be given an aftercare advice sheet.

Remember:

Unwashed hands are the worst enemies of piercings. Touching your piercing can spread germs and may cause an infection to your piercing.

For the first few weeks a new piercing might:

- Be tender, itchy and the surrounding area may look slightly red on white skin or a little darker than usual on dark skin
- Produce a pale fluid that forms a crust
- If you've had an ear or nose cartilage piercing, small lumps can sometimes form around the piercing. The lumps, called granulomas, are trapped fluid. You can treat them by soaking a pad in warm water then holding the pad against them once a day.

Top Tips

- Check that the business is Licenced with L.B.Barnet .and that the piercer is qualified and experienced. Tel Licensing Team 020 8359 7443 or email : licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk
- Check yourself that the premises, equipment and the piercer look clean, tidy and hygienic.
- Clean your piercing twice a day using warm, salty water to soften any crusting. Gently turn the jewellery while cleaning the piercing using a clean paper towel to dry the piercing. Do not use a towel or cotton wool to dry the piercing.
- Gargle with salty water or an alcohol-free mouthwash if you have a mouth piercing.
- Do not go swimming for the first 24 hours after a piercing
- **If you have any doubts about the piercer**, the premises or just about having a body piercing, leave the premises and give yourself more time to think about it.

Find out more: Licencing Team email: licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk

Public Health email: publichealth@barnet.gov.uk