

# Health Protection

## Body piercing and body modification

### Lesson Plan

June 2021

Lesson Plan for 11 – 18 years

#### **Lesson aim:**

This lesson aims to look at the potential risks resulting from illegal body piercing and other body modifications. To provide young people with information to enable well informed decisions about if to undertake body piercing and what safeguards to consider.

#### **Learning outcomes:**

- ☐ To understand the health risks associated with body piercing and other forms of body modifications
- ☐ To understand the long term personal implications (cosmetic/legal – perceptions and relationships)
- ☐ To be aware of the law in relation to having, or giving body piercings.

**Timing: 40 minutes**

**Resources:** PowerPoint slide deck ( set with notes and asset without notes)

**Preparation:** Back ground reading

**Related issues:** health protection, personal identity, body image, personal responsibility, taboos and culture, social influencers, sexual identity

#### **Session breakdown**

<b>Starter</b>	<b>Introduction to session and check out group views on body piercings.</b>  <b>Why do people want to have body piercings?</b>	<b>10 mins</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>History, public health risks, what to consider,</b>	<b>30 mins</b>	<b>PowerPoint presentation with discussion</b>
<b>Close</b>			

## Lesson Plan

Introduction	Supporting activity
<p>The aim of this lesson is to look at the potential risks resulting from illegal body piercing and other body modifications. To provide you with information to enable well informed decisions about if to undertake body piercing and what safeguards to consider.</p> <p>We are not saying don't get a piercing just to consider it carefully and understand what is involved as well as the risks.</p> <p>If you are thinking of getting one done then go to a licensed experienced piercer, don't be attempted to go to someone's house to have it done, or attempt to do this yourself.</p> <p>Body piercing is a form of body modification. <b>Body modification</b> (or <b>body alteration</b>) is the deliberate altering of the physical appearance of our body. Within the law and with regard to consent, people should not be prevented from expressing themselves by changing their body, but there need to be protections in place to ensure that infection control and other health risks are minimised.</p> <p>Some types of body modification are relatively new while others have been practiced for centuries.</p> <p>People choose to engage in body piercing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious and cultural reasons, for example, in certain Asian and African cultures, women (and some men) will wear a heavy piece of jewellery to stretch the length of their necks in order to be considered more beautiful</li> <li>• aesthetic reasons- beauty is defined by culture for instance, at various times throughout history, women would wear <b>corsets</b> to make their waists or midsections appear smaller. In China, many girls and women have for centuries practiced <b>foot binding</b>, which involves breaking all of the toes except for the big toe and tightly wrapping the feet so they cannot grow. The purpose was to make women and girls more attractive</li> <li>• rites of passage</li> <li>• to display group membership or affiliation</li> <li>• self-expression.</li> </ul> <p>Below are some other ways in which people engage in body modification:</p> <p><b>Tattoo</b>- a mark, figure, design, or word intentionally fixed or placed on the skin usually involving injection of a pigment under the skin.</p> <p><b>Scarification</b> – creating permanent scarring of the skin using a scalpel and cutting a design into the skin, the healing process has to be prolonged to define the scar.</p> <p><b>Branding</b> – another form of scarification where the skin is scarred using a cauterising machine or in some cases just heating up a piece of copper wire with a Bunsen burner then applying it directly to the skin.</p>	<p><b>Slide 1 – 4</b></p> <p><b>Why do people engage in body piercing?</b> <b>Group discussion</b></p> <p><b>What other forms of body modification are you aware of?</b> <b>Group discussion</b></p>

<p><b>Enlargement jewellery</b>– such as a flesh tunnel, where a larger piece of jewellery is used to increase the size of the pierced site. The stretched area will not return to normal.</p> <p><b>Implants</b>– insertion of inert, subcutaneous materials such as beads beneath the skin giving a raised effect.</p>	
<p><b>History and social context</b></p> <p>Body modification has been a part of human culture for a very long time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ötzi the Iceman was discovered naturally preserved in ice in the South Tyrol, Italy. At 5300 years old, he is older than the Egyptian pyramids and Stonehenge and his is the oldest skin ever discovered – notably covered in 61 black tattoos.</li> <li>• In South America, the Aztecs used piercing and blood letting as a form of punishment to bring individuals back in line with society rules;</li> <li>• the Greeks and Romans used tattooing to indicate status or clan membership as well as for religious reasons.</li> </ul> <p>Today, forms of body modification continue and vary by culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facial and bodily scarring is a common practice amongst the Tiv and Yoruba of Nigeria,</li> <li>• Maori culture includes body and face tattoos</li> <li>• the Karen people who live in Thailand and Myanmar use neck rings to push down the collarbone and upper ribs and give the appearance of a longer neck.</li> <li>• ear stretching, is part of tribal culture for the Maasai in Kenya and Huaorani of the Amazon</li> <li>• gangs in the US use tattoos to symbolise group affiliation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Slide 5</b></p>
<p><b>Public health issues</b></p> <p>Piercings have been on the increase, with a shift away from traditional earlobe piercings towards other parts of the body, for example, finger piercings. A 2008 study found that 14.6% of women and 5.1% of men in England had a non-earlobe body piercing, with women aged 16-24 having the highest rates of all groups (46.2%).</p> <p>Ear piercing guns and a range of other equipment and material are easily available to be purchased on e-bay and other online outlets.</p> <p><b>Public health risks:</b> infections, no hygiene or practice inspections, product and equipment quality, no reputational or business risk if not registered, risk of inferior quality materials lack of training, personal safety risk – the piercers home is private – what might be going on and put you at risk – exposure to drugs, alcohol, violence, sexual abuse/exploitation. There is a risk to personal safety from unknown/unregulated environment and the people within.</p> <p>Unlicensed premises fall under the radar and often have little or no hygienic practices in place. Disposable equipment is often reused without the operator understanding why it shouldn't be, so the risks of</p>	<p><b>Slide 6</b></p> <p><b>What are the risks of going to an unlicensed, unqualified and inexperienced piercer?</b></p> <p><b>Group discussion</b></p>

<p>passing on blood borne viruses, Hepatitis and HIV increase.</p> <p>Equipment isn't cleaned and sterilised and no after care being given. The procedure could be carried out in someone's kitchen or bathroom.</p>	
<p><b>The law and consent</b></p> <p><b>Licensing</b></p> <p>In London the London Local Authority Act 1991 enabled London councils to set their own licensing conditions for business carrying out "Special Treatments" including body piercing. The licensing conditions are there to protect public health and set out the hygiene and safety standards for the business in respect of the premises, equipment, procedures and practices.</p> <p>Barnet Council has made regulations that deal with the licence application process and set certain conditions that the licence holder must comply with while working in the Borough. It is an offence not to do so (Regulations made by the Barnet London Borough Council under section 7(4) and section 10(1) of the London Local Authorities Act 1991).</p> <p>This means that body piercing can only be legally undertaken through licenced piercers in L.B.Barnet.</p> <p>Contact Licensing if you need to check <a href="mailto:licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk">licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Health and safety at work</b></p> <p>General health and safety legislation (Health and safety at Work Act 1974) also applies along with relevant codes of practice that cover safe and hygienic working practices.</p> <p><b>Public Health legislation</b></p> <p>In very serious situations or outbreaks there are more stringent public health legislation that can also be used to investigate and support those affected by the incident.</p> <p><b>Consent</b></p> <p>While for Tattoos it is illegal for anyone under 18 to have a tattoo even with parental consent, it is more complex for body piercing. There is no legal minimum age for body piercing, however most responsible piercers will ask for parental consent if children and young people under 16 years of age and to be present whilst the procedure is carried out.</p> <p>The Barnet Code of Practice states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Young people must be over the age of 18 for all types of body piercing other than ear, nose, labaret, eyebrow or navel. Under no circumstances shall the lip, tongue, the curled part of the ear cartilage, nose cartilage, nipple, genital area or any other part of any person under the age of 18 be pierced.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No body piercing shall be administered to any person under the age of 16 with the exception of ear, nose and navel piercing or any</li> </ul>	<p>Slide 7</p>

<p>person between the ages of 14 and 16 with parental consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Person's aged between 16 and 18 must provide identification which includes a photograph and date of birth e.g. Passport or driving licence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Anyone under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. The parent/guardian must sign a consent form at the time of the piercing (informed consent)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Piercing of the nipples or genitalia for both sexes under the age of 16 are prohibited. Under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 girls and boys under the age of 16 cannot give legal consent to intimate sexual contact under any circumstances therefore this can be regarded as an assault offence.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Barnet CoP 3 section 9 Special treatments   Barnet Council</a></p> <p><i>Any concerns about body piercing practices or social media accounts that may violate the law related to body piercing contact Barnet Licensing Team: <a href="mailto:licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk">licensingadmin@barnet.gov.uk</a></i></p>	
<p><b>What can go wrong?</b></p> <p><b>Pain, Bleeding and Swelling:</b> Using a good and experienced tattooist or piercer will minimise the risk of this</p> <p><b>Localised Infection:</b> This is where the wound becomes infected with bacteria and may result from having been pierced in unhygienic conditions. It can also occur if your aftercare is poor.</p> <p><b>Infectious Disease:</b> There is a risk of contracting bacterial infections such as Tetanus 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 tattooist or piercer will have had the vaccine for Hepatitis B.</p> <p><b>Allergic reactions:</b> For example, latex, nickel or other metals, or the cleaning and disinfecting chemicals which may come into contact with skin.</p> <p><a href="#">Infected piercings - NHS (www.nhs.uk)</a></p>	<p>Slide 8-10</p>
<p><b>Case study</b></p> <p>There have been a number of incidence across the UK of infections that have arisen from body piercings that have gone wrong due to unhygienic and unsafe practices.</p> <p>As an example:</p> <p><b>Daniel Hindle</b> was a 17 year old student from Sheffield and in 2002 he went to have a lip piercing. Daniel was born with a heart condition which meant he was more at risk than the general population if he contracted an infection. Three months after this piercing Daniel was dead. At the inquest the Coroner could not say that Daniel died as a direct result of having his lip pierced but neither could that link be ruled out. At the time Daniel died many people with pre-existing heart conditions didn't know that they were more at risk if they had a piercing.</p> <p>If you go into a licenced practitioner today you should be asked about your medical condition and fill in a form to declare that you do or don't have certain conditions. If you do have certain medical conditions the</p>	<p>Slide 11</p>

<p>piercer should direct you to see your GP first before having the procedure carried out, this is to protect your health.</p> <p>Again it is unlikely that someone carrying out illegal piercings will be asking you this kind of information.</p>	
<p><b>Role of hygiene and vaccinations</b></p> <p>Our immune system generally fights any harmful microbes that may enter our bodies. Getting plenty of rest, eating the correct foods and getting lots of sleep all help our immune system work properly hence preventing infection.</p> <p>Another means of assisting our immune system is through <b>vaccinations</b>. Vaccines are used to prevent NOT treat infection. A <b>vaccine</b> is usually made from weak or inactive versions of the same microbes that make us ill. In some cases, the vaccines are made from organisms which are similar to, but not exactly, the microbes that make us ill.</p> <p>When the vaccine is injected into the body the immune system attacks it as if the harmful microbes were attacking the body. The <b>white blood cells</b> create lots of <b>antibodies</b> to attach to specific markers on the surface, called <b>antigens</b>, of the vaccine organisms. Because the vaccine is an extremely weakened version of the microbe the WBC successfully eliminate all these cells and it will not make you ill. By successfully eliminating all the vaccine, the immune system remembers how to combat those microbes. The next time microbes carrying the same markers/antigen enter the body the immune system is ready to fight it before it has a chance to make you ill.</p> <p>In some cases, the immune system needs reminding and this is why some vaccinations require booster jabs.</p> <p>Some microbes like the flu, are tricky. They evolve so fast changing their markers/antigens. This means that the immune system can't remember how to fight them. For this reason, we have annual flu vaccinations.</p> <p>Booster: diphtheria, tetanus, polio</p> <p>This vaccine is known as the 3-in-1 teenage booster, or the Td/IPV, and provides continued protection against diphtheria, tetanus and polio. This booster vaccine is usually given between the ages of 13 and 18 and is given as a single injection.</p> <p><a href="http://e-bug.eu">Vaccinations (e-bug.eu)</a> <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">Tetanus - NHS (www.nhs.uk)</a></p>	<p>Slide12</p>
<p><b>Reminder of important messages:</b></p> <p>Consider carefully all the facts and risks before deciding to go ahead with a piercing.</p> <p>Always use a licenced, trained and experienced piercer.</p> <p>Always be clear on your responsibility for aftercare and keep piercings clean- watch out for infection!</p>	<p>Slide 13 -14</p>

