

The POINT - official newsletter of the:



TM ...the cutting edge of piercing technology

• ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS™

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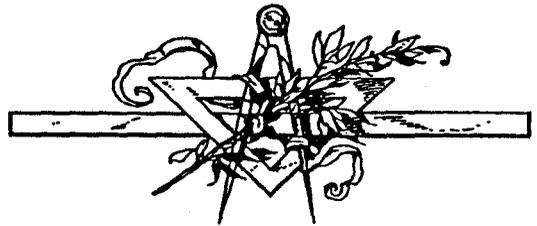
Hello again, and welcome to *The Point*. We're really glad you made the choice to join us in our efforts to make piercing a safe, positive, evolving craft for everyone.

In this issue we introduce our letters section, which we hope will eventually make up a substantial portion of the newsletter. Subscribers are also encouraged- nay, begged- to submit health and safety, ethics, product and related articles and opinions. Inclusion of any letters or other submissions in *The Point* does not indicate official APP support, endorsement, or approval of the views put forth. Rather, the goal is a roundtable discussion of sorts. What is safe, skilled piercing? What does it mean to be a "professional"? How should we approach lawmakers and health officials with our needs? What formats would be most effective at getting our message across? We hope to hear from as many piercers as possible on these and other pressing issues.

In fact, we are holding a meeting **February 4, 7:30 pm** at **Nomad** in **San Francisco**. The address is **1881 Hayes St**. All subscribers are encouraged to attend. We will be discussing the organization's goals, brainstorming for ideas, and attempting to define the issue of membership. If you are unable to attend, please send us your thoughts, by letter. They will be read at the meeting, and given full and equal consideration. We really need to get clear on who we

are and where we want to go, and we all seem to have some great ideas. Let's figure it out!

The next issue of *The Point* will be produced by Richard White, of Primeval Body in Los Angeles. Send submissions either to our regular address, or to Primeval Body at 4647 Russell Ave, LA CA 90027. The deadline is April 1. Would anyone conversant with QuarkXpress like to do issue # 4?



PLEA FOR HELP

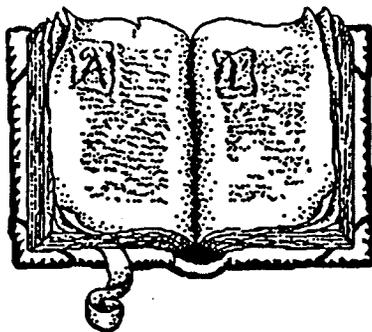
APP is compiling a directory of piercing friendly/piercing aware medical professionals as a resource for the community. If you are fortunate enough to know a doctor, nurse, or other qualified medical practitioner (Herbalists? Dentists? Acupuncturists?) who is familiar with piercings and piercing-related health information, please forward their stats to us. A directory would be wonderful for all of us, as well as our piercees.

Note: We were so excited about getting our first issue to you that there was an error. Item number 4 of the "Basic Ten" should

read:

4.) I agree that all reuseable, nonsterilizable implements, such as calipers, should be nonporous and disinfected after each use with bleach solution or a commercial hard-surface disinfectant liquid.

We're sorry for any inconvenience or confusion this may have caused!



JEWELRY METALS

PRODUCT ALERT #1

Is that new piercing keeping you out of the family hot tub or swimming pool? Now it doesn't have to! 3M manufactures a transparent, sterile dressing called Tegaderm. Previously available only by prescription, Tegaderm forms a watertight, yet non-occlusive seal over wounds (and piercings). The packaging advises against using Tegaderm on wounds which are already infected or dirty, and I wouldn't personally think it would be great on a brand new piercing, but Tegaderm sounds ideal for those folks whose two month old navel piercing is ruining their vacation. The cost is reasonable; about \$3.00 for a pack of six.

- Paul King
Gauntlet
San Francisco, CA

Most of us agree upon the metals that are considered acceptable for insertion into body piercings- surgical stainless steel, solid 14k or 18k gold, niobium, titanium, and platinum. We also generally agree that metals like silver are "bad". But- why? What exactly makes these metals desirable or undesirable for piercing jewelry? Why does one metal promote healing, while another causes a dramatic infectious reaction? Let's take a look at some of the basic facts about common jewelry metals:

SILVER

It is commonly believed that piercing jewelry is not made out of silver because of silver's high nickel content. Yes, nickel is indeed very toxic, and prolonged exposure to it has landed people in the hospital. However, there is no nickel whatsoever in silver! A metal known as nickel silver does exist, but it is not used as a jewelry metal.

Sterling silver is composed of 925 parts silver and 75 parts copper. Neither of these metals are very fond of sulphur, an agent which corrodes them. The result of combining silver and sulphur is a material known as silver salts, which is toxic. The human body contains a fair amount of sulphur in its

chemical makeup, so it stands to reason that a responsible piercer would not choose to put silver jewelry into anyone's piercings.

GOLD

There are many misconceptions about gold as well. Gold is alloyed with metals such as copper, silver, zinc, and nickel. These metals add hardness, durability, and scratch resistance to the very soft gold. For some reason, the copper and silver are made more stable and sulphur-resistant by alloying them with the gold.

The gold/alloy combinations are assigned a karat number. 24 karat is 100% gold, 18k is 75% gold, 14k is 58.33% gold, and so on. For our purposes as piercers, 18k and 14k gold are the ideal combinations of purity/nonreaction and ability to withstand bacteria harboring scratches.

We've just been discussing yellow gold. As regards other colors of gold, white gold is made with 25% platinum (a good metal) and 12% palladium or nickel, usually nickel owing to the expense and brittleness of palladium. Green gold is 30-40% silver/cadmium/zinc - probably not a great jewelry metal.

What about gold plating or filling? Gold plating involves electroplating a very thin layer of gold onto a base metal, usually aluminum. Obviously this thin layer is bound to chip off, leaving rough edges and exposing the cheap base metal. Not too cool! Gold filled jewelry is even worse. This method involves rolling a layer of very cheap gold - about 1% gold - onto a base metal. What's the point?

The manufacturers of ear guns claim that their studs are hypoallergenic - that the base metal for their gold plating is surgical stainless steel. While this is technically true, stainless steel plates very badly. To get the gold to stick to it, it's necessary to do an "underplating", using one of our good pals, nickel or copper. When the gold plating wears off,

which metal gets exposed first? Do you want to take a chance on that?

SURGICAL STAINLESS STEEL

This is the metal most of us use, most of the time. Steel is an alloy of iron and up to 1.7% carbon. The carbon imparts hardness, tensile strength, and brittleness, though a well-tempered piece of steel will not be as brittle. There are two types of steel - plain carbon steel, and alloy steel. Alloy steel, as the name implies, contains small amounts of other metals, as well as carbon.

Stainless steel contains molybdenum, nickel (1.25 to 22%), chromium (10% to 20%), silicon, sulphur, phosphorus, and carbon. The various alloys impart special characteristics, such as durability, corrosion resistance, machinability, etc.

Surgical quality stainless steel contains minimal amounts of reactive materials like nickel. Low-carbon surgical stainless is much higher quality and easier to work with from a piercer's standpoint. The type we should all be using is 300 series, although threadings and beads may be of 400 series steel since they won't directly contact tissue.

ANNEALING

Annealing is a process of heating and cooling metals to render them more workable, or to remove internal stresses which may occur during the working of the metal. The metal is heated to a predetermined temperature, lower than its critical point, for a particular amount of time. It is then usually cooled slowly, although for some alloys, rapid cooling is required to avoid cracks.

Soft Annealing is applied to metals which have become hardened during cold metal working (rolling, deep drawing, spinning, and severe bending). This allows the jeweler to continue working the metal.

Temper Annealing, or partial annealing, is applied to work-hardened metals to partial-

ly soften them. This process makes jewelry easier for piercers to bend, and less likely to break after repeated manipulation. Many manufacturers don't temper their metals. This accounts for that annoying stiffness that makes you reach for a pair of pliers. Some avoid tempering intentionally, citing a desire to make the piece more scratch-resistant, but many neglect to temper out of ignorance.

Stress-Equalizing Annealing is applied to work-hardened metals which are heated to a temperature too low to soften, but high enough to equalize or homogenize stresses in the metal and increase its mechanical properties. This process is of interest to owners of gold jewelry that is frequently torqued. After sterilization, the used piece can be annealed on a yearly basis to avoid breakage.

NIBIUM

Niobium, also known as columbium, was only discovered in 1801, and has only recently been used as a jewelry metal. It is commonly found in nature with tantalum, a less desirable jewelry metal. Niobium is hard, steely, gray-white, highly resistant to corrosion and elemental- no alloys are present. This makes niobium a superb choice for piercers who have metal sensitivities. Niobium also anodizes beautifully.

TITANIUM

Titanium, discovered in 1791, is probably one of the most abundant metals in the earth's crust. In the form known as C.P. (commercial purity) unalloyed titanium is white, lustrous, appears silvery and is a superior jewelry metal. It is highly corrosion resistant, nonmagnetic, and is equal in strength to yet four times harder than stainless steel. For this reason, titanium is quickly replacing surgical stainless steel as a surgical implant material. Titanium anodizes quite well, and

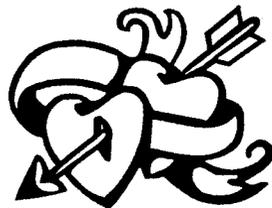
displays an entirely different range of colors than niobium.

ANODIZING

This is the one method that's proven safe for getting color onto piercing jewelry. The ring is placed into an oxygenated saline bath, which is then electrified. This creates a layer of oxidized material. The thickness of the layer is determined by the voltage, and the color is determined by the thickness of the layer. What is the color? Our eyes translate light refracting off the (nontoxic) oxidized surface as iridescent color. This helps to explain why lighter colors of niobium/titanium jewelry seem to dull, while darker colors remain more vibrant. Incidentally, piercing jewelry will never match the vibrancy of anodized aluminum... because anodized aluminum contains dyes to enhance the colors.

ETCETERA...

Yes, there are many other safe and not so safe jewelry materials: acrylic, Lucite, platinum, monofilament nylon, etc. There isn't space in this issue to cover everything. But in future issues, I hope that knowledgeable subscribers will write in to tell us about the pros and cons of various materials and jewelrymaking techniques. Perhaps someone could discuss styles of jewelry and their relative merits for sundry piercings. Or, why smaller gauges (or larger gauges) work better for a particular piercing. Or any other jewelry-related information that folks want to discuss. Let's talk! -By Michaela Grey





BOB'S BURRITOS, BIKES, BOOKS, AND BODY PIERCING?

A specialized service such as piercing, though popular, is not to be approached lightly. Proper training and sterilization are as essential to the service as the ability of the piercer.

With the recent veto of California Bill #AB3787, dozens of retail stores who also pierce have sprung up like weeds. Due to the unregulated nature of body piercing, many less than professional people are out to get in on the action.

Personally, I would only trust my body to someone who provides that service exclusively, be it tattooing or piercing.

In the retail/storefront context, when a multitude of goods and services are offered, it is reasonable to assume that there is a dilution of quality. Businesses which pierce and tattoo should do so in separate areas, taking care to be aware of cross-contamination and health procedures.

"Professional" is an over-used term; and training? By whom? When? Where? Apprenticeship to the professional level is a lengthy process which requires years of training and dedication. Don't be afraid to ask these questions and check out credentials. Never compromise safety where your body is concerned. "Professionals" don't

pierce out of head shops or hair salons- they work in full-service piercing studios.

Anyone who displays a diploma or has taken a "school" has probably been inadequately trained. A few piercings and a piece of paper do not make you a "professional". There is no substitute for experience.

-By Blake Perlingieri
Nomad
San Francisco, CA



SUBMIT!

What are your thoughts on the subjects discussed in this issue? Do you have anything to add, subtract, divide or multiply? Have you discovered something new, or do you want to share a handy tip with subscribers? Does a health and safety issue, ethical concern, or legislative worry need to be addressed? No one will know what you think if you don't submit!

Articles will be edited for grammatical and space considerations only, and authors should expect to be variously disagreed with, challenged, or supported by other subscribers. That's exactly the *Point*. Send submissions to Primeval Body or our mailing address, by April 1, 1995.

LETTERS

Dear APP:

My name is Brice Scot. I work at Aardvark Tattoos in Akron, Ohio, on a professional level as a tattooist and piercer. I've been piercing approximately seven months. Prior to and during that seven months, I studied numerous articles from the publication PFIQ. The Pierce With a Pro #1 video was also a very big help to me. I have also studied Gray's Anatomy to learn more about the human body. Unfortunately, I had no one to apprentice under; however, I feel I have learned a substantial amount on my own.

I have also voiced my opinion to the Akron Department of Public Health as to why body piercing shops should be regulated to keep a clean, sterile environment. I received letters from both Jim Ward of Gauntlet and Michael of Body Designs stating the reasons why ear piercing guns should only be used on ears. With the help of those letters and a local piercer by the name of James Brady, we got a regulation passed in Akron that states that no ear guns are to be used on any part of the body other than earlobes. It also states regulations as to keeping a sterile shop. I am very proud to have been a part of this law that now allows our community to be pierced properly. I feel that with this accomplishment and the future goals of the APP, we as a union can enjoy our careers without the threat of intervention from negative aspects of the "community".

I feel strongly about the goals of APP, and would be honored to be a part of the

Association of Professional Piercers. I would also like to help in any way possible to reach the Association's future goals.

Sincerely,
Brice Scot
Aardvark Tattoos
Akron, OH

APP:

First of all, I have to say that I'm so excited to see the APP get started, and I look forward to becoming an active member. Here is a donation of \$50.00 to help the APP in any way.

Indiana law on body piercing is in a kind of limbo right now. No word is mentioned in the "West's Annotated Indiana Code" on piercing, but it does state "practice of medicine or osteopathic medicine means any one or combination of the following... c) The performing of any kind of surgical operation upon a human being, including tattooing, or the penetration of the skin or body orifice by any means, for the intended palliation, relief, cure...". I have tried many times and spent hours on the phone trying to get some clarification on the laws, and all I get is someone reading that paragraph from the Indiana Code. When I ask any other questions, they always reply, "I can't say anything more." Now, there are over 6 tattoo studios in Indianapolis alone, and most have been open for at least a few years. So, yes, it's illegal but it's ignored. I think...

As far as what I want from the APP, I can think of many things... 1.) Help piercers with their state's legislation. 2.) Current informa-

tion on new piercings or even old ones. Information on anatomy. Latest research on chemicals that are safe and aren't too harsh on our tools. (is it just me, or are you guys and gals having trouble finding good ring expanding pliers that can withstand chemicals and autoclaving?) Also, I don't think the APP should be open to anyone who just pays for membership; perhaps some requirements should be met first. Maybe a workshop of some type, and the person's shop should be considered too. Well, that's all I got.

Kent Fazekas
Body Accents
Indianapolis, IN

Dear APP,

Thank you for the recent copy of The Point. This organization is a much needed part of the industry. I thought your first issue was excellent, and we proudly display the Piercee's Bill of Rights in our studio as well as the From Sterile to Clean to Contaminated chart. Thank you again. I look forward to future issues of the Point.

Sincerely,
Melissa Strobbe
Tie Me Down
Milwaukee, WI

Dear Michaela,

I was given your name by "Daddy Kane" regarding the APP. I had heard mention of it in rec.arts.bodyart (an internet newsgroup), but thought nothing of it. Your colleague suggested that I contact you about it. So here I am. I would be very interested in becoming part of the organization, if it's a sensible outfit.

We have an association of "pro piercers"(joke!) here called the EPPA. They charge about 20 pounds to join and that's it. Anyone who pays can be a member. I do not want to be associated with organizations of

that nature. Some of their pros don't even use autoclaves!

Can you advise me on the aims and function of the APP, so that I can see if your goals are in harmony with mine. I am committed to providing the best piercing service available anywhere in the world. We are just about to set up a World Wide Web service so that everyone across the world can tap into a valid and reliable source of data about piercing/aftercare/other forms of modification. It might be good to get the APP involved.

Won't go into too much detail as this is an introductory contact, but I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanx, and all the best,
Warren Dean
Proprietor "Perforations"
Brighton, England

Dear APP,

I would like to draw your attention to the existence of the Internet newsgroup rec.arts.bodyart, a forum devoted to the discussion of body art- piercing, tattooing, scarification, and branding. Current readership of the group stands at about 64,000 internationally. This number should grow by about 15,000 during the course of the new academic year, as a large portion of Internet readership consists of college and university students.

Each Internet newsgroup features an FAQ- frequently asked questions- which is posted monthly to the group and which can be accessed at several archive sites. rec.arts.bodyarts features two FAQs- the tattoo FAQ (which also includes basic information on cutting and branding), managed by L a n i T e s h i m a - M i l l e r (teshima@uhunix.uhcc.Hawaii.edu), and the piercing FAQ, managed by myself.

The piercing FAQ, currently comprised of

nine files, features information on every aspect of piercing, including a list of piercings and recommended jewelry, jewelry quality, healing and aftercare, piercing play and adornment, removal of piercings for surgery, and several "piercing experiences"- personal accounts of both standard and more unusual piercings. Also featured is a comprehensive list of piercers and jewelry manufacturers and suppliers worldwide. This list serves to aid readers in selecting a qualified piercer in their area. Wherever possible, personal accounts are offered as references.

Anyone interested in receiving the piercing FAQ via electronic mail can write me at aardvark@holonet.net.

Sincerely,

Anne Greenblatt



ETHICS IN PIERCING

ETHICS AND/OR ETHICAL:

1.) Conforming to professional standards of conduct.

2.) The system of morals of a particular person, religion, or group.

As piercers, we should seriously consider several ethical issues. This is a brief outline of the issues I feel are most important to us, and my opinions about them. In future issues, I'll elaborate on individual topics. I think we should all start talking about these things before it's too late. I want to hear feedback from other piercers.

AGE

Piercing anyone under eighteen can put you and the customer at risk. Why? Well, in my experience, the maturity level of the piercee will affect the outcome of the piercing. Constant care is required to properly heal any piercing. Some underaged customers may not take the necessary time and care. Parental consent is a big issue- I know of quite a few cases where piercers have been sued for piercing minors. The piercer who agrees to work on underage customers puts themselves in danger of possible legal problems. An ethical piercer will firmly and automatically refuse to pierce a minor who is not with his or her parent. Minors who come in with a parent or legal guardian should be evaluated on an individual basis. Some piercers might have more flexible rules, whereas others might refuse to pierce all minors across the board. In any case, a sense of ethics and responsibility should play a major part in your decision.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

To define ethics in the realm of health and safety would require a whole article in itself (ed- or a whole quarterly magazine!). But the bottom line is: If you are a piercer with any questions whatsoever as to the guidelines of health and safety, STOP PIERCING until you have the information necessary to responsibly protect yourself and your clientele from disease transmission.

PIERCING GUNS

Piercing guns are obsolete, a thing of the past. Using guns is irresponsible and unprofessional, and anyone who uses them is not a piercer! These guns are not sterile, and not sterilizable. This is extraordinarily dangerous, because fluid microspray will be present on the gun.

Bloodborne pathogens can easily be passed from person to person in this way. If

they are autoclaved, rusting will quickly set in, and the body will melt- they are useless.

Even if they were sterilizable, the guns are inaccurate, using a blunt as hell stud backing to rip through the tissue. The healing hole will be jagged and uneven, which complicates healing. Most piercing gun studs don't have a long enough post to allow for swelling, so oxygen and circulation to the area is limited. This is especially apparent when people make the mistake of using guns on ear cartilage.

The gun is brutal on skin. They are loud and sudden, often causing piercees to jerk back. In such a case, the stud gets stuck in the skin and must be removed by a "piercer" who usually isn't wearing gloves, replaced in the gun, recocked, and shot back through the tender, bleeding tissue. This disaster is very common when guns are used to pierce nipples.

The issue of piercing guns is definitely one of ethics. Plain and simple, it is irresponsible and unethical to use ear piercing guns on anything other than earlobes, and then, only if absolutely necessary.

EXPERIENCE

The matter of experience is also a broad category. If you are an ethical, responsible piercer, and you haven't learned the proper technique and procedure for a given piercing, you will not attempt it until you observe and learn from an experienced professional.

HONESTY

Is the anatomy of this customer appropriate for the piercing they have requested? A piercing fee or jewelry sale should never outweigh the importance of telling the customer the truth and sparing them from a potential piercing disaster.

IN CLOSING

The issue here is ethics, or, more specifically, being ethical without being self-righteous, condescending, or presumptuous. I have toured around the country piercing. I have encountered many people with piercings that are so horrendous that one can only deduce that whoever pierced them was not only completely unskilled, but devoid of moral principles. Obviously, every individual will develop their own personal set of ethics. That's important, to allow piercees the freedom of selecting a piercer who will suit their needs. But on some levels, and around certain subjects, a group code of responsible behavior is crucial. A piercer can be technically skilled without being ethical, but I don't think anyone can be a good piercer without a strong sense of ethics.

-by Gahdi



RESPONSIBLE PIERCING

Often it is difficult to decide whether a piercing should be done. A client may want a piercing that is likely to result in an unwanted scar. A client may desire a piercing that isn't suited to their anatomy. A client may want a piercing with an inappropriate piece of jewelry -one that you know won't fit, or that could tear or migrate out of the skin. A client may request an experimental piercing that might endanger their health or safety. In all of these situations, the client has an expectation and a vision of what they want for their body, and you know from experience that it just won't work. Two choices are available:

1.) Redesign or restructure appropriate, safe jewelry /piercings to fit the piercee's origi-

nal vision as close as possible.

2.) Explain why it is in the piercee's best interest to choose a different piercing/piece of jewelry.

Most clients appreciate an honest, informed opinion, and want a piercing to heal quickly, be durable, and perform its given function.

Responsible piercers design their work to leave no significant scarring. Most surface to surface piercings will not heal, leave scars, and will be rejected soon after being performed. Even clients who are fully informed of the risk of scarring want to believe that they will be the exception. Do not pierce flat flaps of skin unless the client knows that scarring is a real probability, and you might not want to do such piercings on highly visible body parts- face, neck, hands, nape of neck. Many tattoo artists use the same discretion with those visible areas. Since most piercers lack formal or holistic medical training, we depend on what we can feel or see on or under the skin. It seems obvious to avoid any veins or major capillaries, but it can be a more subtle skill to avoid major neural networks. A piercing that may result in neurological problems or long term bleeding is simply not worth the experiment. And any resulting health complications could easily cause legal problems for you, even while casting a negative light on the piercing industry as a whole. The general public, particularly the medical and legislative communities, don't look too kindly on us as it is. A similar concern exists for such "new" developments as the uvula piercing. Before any attempt, consider the worst possible scenario- a swallowed needle- and decide whether the risks to your client, your business, and the industry's reputation outweigh the final product.

Because everyone is built differently, not everyone is perfectly designed for all of the

standard piercings. Many clients opt for a second opinion when one piercer tells them that their navels aren't pierceable. Sometimes it is impossible to position the piercing to work best with the shape of their "flap", but often, there is no flap to work with at all. Lack of adequately pierceable tissue can also occur with clitoral hood, labia, and clitoral piercings, among several. It is unethical to pierce someone without discussing the likelihood of a torn or rejected piercing. Your client doesn't need to feel "defective" in any way- stress that other types of piercings may be far more functional and pleasurable, while being more suited to their body.

Some people will pierce with any jewelry on hand to make a quick buck. It is unethical to pierce if the jewelry does not fit your client properly. Inappropriate jewelry can cause keloiding, irritation, abscessing, and pain. At Venus, we turn down most requests to pierce with jewelry brought in by the client. It is likely that this jewelry will be too large or too small in diameter, length, or gauge to fit. A piercing should never be planned to fit a piece of jewelry. Jewelry should always be chosen to best fit the individual's anatomy. The quality of a piece of jewelry can also affect healing time. Consider carefully before agreeing to pierce with jewelry from an unknown source.

It is important for piercers to realize that their work ethic directly affects themselves, their clients, their business, and ultimately, the entire industry. Hopefully, subscribers to *The Point* share the concerns outlined above and will help define responsible piercing with these thoughts in mind, on their own terms.

-by Maria Tashjian
Venus Modern Body Arts
New York, NY

PRODUCT ALERT #2

There is a condom on the market which is particularly well suited for men with penis piercings. Good fit, good feel, holds up well during rigorous play. Read on!

We all have heard the good reasons for men to wear condoms. They help prevent transmission of the virus believed to cause AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintentional pregnancy. Condoms are also very important in protecting a healing penis piercing from infection.

While stories of piercings breaking condoms are rare, "double-bagging" and buying only top quality condoms help prevent breakage during sex. Putting a drop or two of (water-based only) lubricant in the condom tip before wearing helps with both breakage control and improved sensation.

Men with penis piercings sometimes find ordinary condoms uncomfortable. So what do you do to attend to health concerns while enjoying hot sex?

Pleasure Plus™ condoms seem to have been invented with pierced penises in mind. They are constructed with a ribbed pouch near the tip. The pouch gives Prince Alberts and Frenums a bit of extra room, and provides pleasant friction in this most sensitive area. Speaking from experience, Pleasure Plus™ condoms feel great, and I have never had one break.

Look for them in the white box with blue print. If your local source doesn't have them, ask that they order a supply from Reddy Distributors, Inc., Windsor Industrial Park #18, Main Street, Windsor NJ 08561.

-By Drew Ward
Gauntlet
San Francisco, CA



I'd like to get *The Point* for the next _____ years at the annual rate of \$20.00

Name _____

Studio Name/Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country/Phone # _____

Enclosed is my check/money order in US funds for \$_____.

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