

# THE POINT

The Official Newsletter for The Association of Professional Piercers

## APP Conference 2001

## APHA 2000

### APP Conference Slated for April in Las Vegas

Save the dates now! You will not want to miss this year's APP Conference and Vendor Fair taking place at Bally's Hotel and Casino on the "strip" in Las Vegas.



The Conference runs from April 9 to 12. The Vendor Fair takes place from April 10-12.

This will be an event that no professional piercer or individual wanting to learn about the industry would want to miss.

There will be 22 classes from which to choose. If you can bring more than one piercer per studio you will best benefit by taking in as much of the information as possible.

As always, we will offer CPR and First Aid and Bloodborne Pathogens training. Both full courses and recertification are available. Other course offerings include Equipment Management, Tray Set-up and, Documentation; Grounding and Bedside Manner; Anthropology and Urban Legends. We will have Anatomy I (body) and Anatomy II (oral and facial anatomy) Tissue Preparation, Stretching and Aftercare. The Piercing Technique class is available only to current APP members. There will also be courses on Liability and Taxation; Legislation; and Appropriate Studio Set-up.

Last year's vendor expo was so successful that we are doubling the size and expanding it to three days. There will be many fine jewelry manufacturers, medical supply companies, insurance providers and others. Also we are extending the hours to make it easier to attend classes and view the vendors' offerings.

We will kick off with an opening party at Gameworks. It is a 47,000 square foot adult arcade. Check out the site [www.gameworks.com](http://www.gameworks.com) for more information.

Last year's Banquet Dinner was a huge success, so we will be having one again this year. There will be food, drink, entertainment, a few short speeches, and the President's award will be presented. The open meeting will take place following the Banquet.

A new feature this year will be Round Table Discussions. There will be an established topic, and a facilitator to keep things on track. The rest will be up to the participants. Everyone attending is expected to contribute. The industry has matured enough that many piercers have a lot to offer other professionals in the field. This will be a fantastic forum for sharing of information.

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### APP Attends APHA Conference in 2000

In November the APP Board met in Boston to represent professional body piercers at the annual American Public Health Association Conference.

All the Board Members were in attendance and rotated through staffing the booth to educate doctors, nurses, public health officials, health inspectors and others about body piercing.

As with our prior appearances at the APHA Conference, we were well received, and some folks even said we were their favorite booth there!

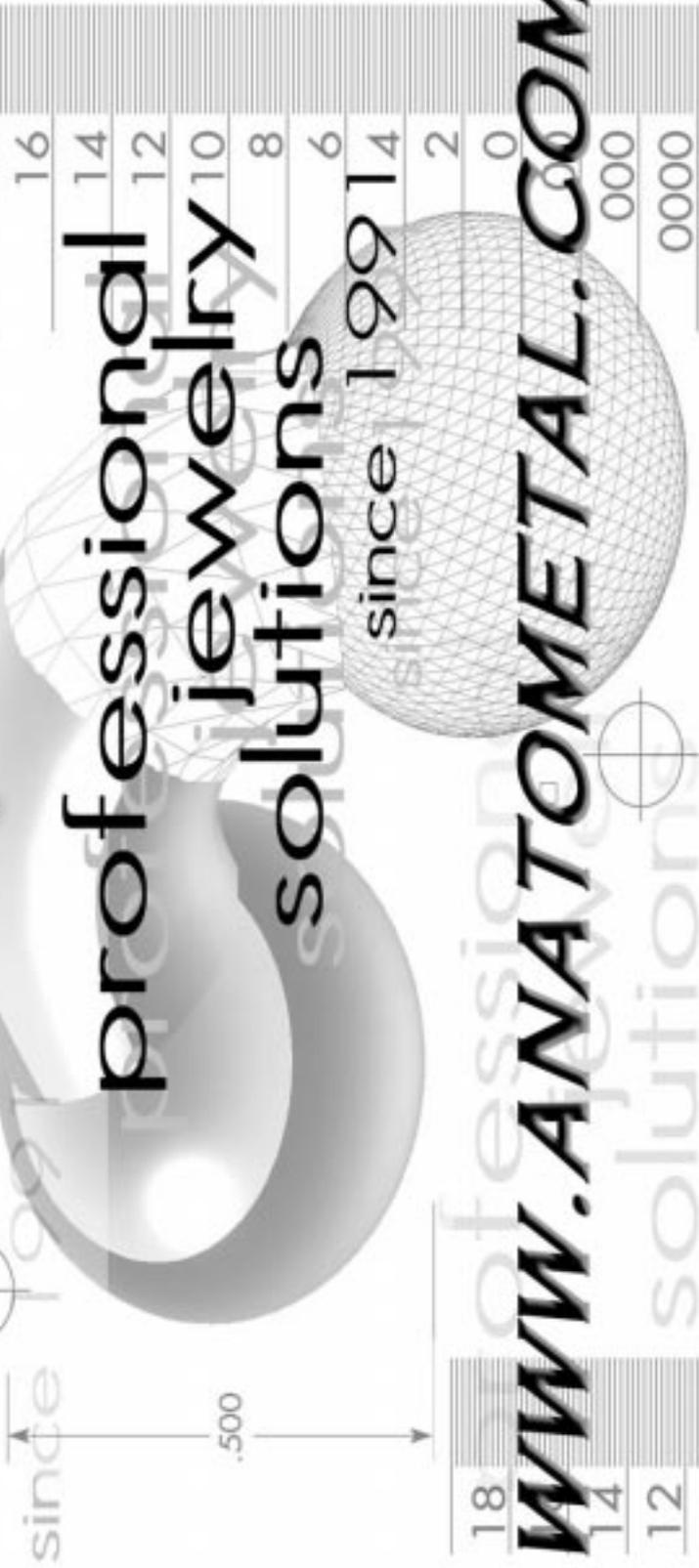
A new feature this year was the data port that we had at the booth. Attendees to the conference each had a card containing a magnetic strip. If they were interested in more information they would swipe the card in our machine. This resulted in a new data base of names and addresses for medical personnel who want to stay updated on the piercing industry.

This year we ran a video tape depicting different types of jewelry being inserted and removed from healed piercings. This tied in well with the distribution of our newest APP brochure:

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## T-shirts and Bowling shirts



**T-shirts will be on sale at the conference or can be purchased from the website ([www.safepiercing.org](http://www.safepiercing.org))**

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**Bowling shirts are \$24.95 each and are available in the two styles shown.**

**Contact Pat McCarthy 614-297-4743 if you are interested in purchasing shirts.**

The Point

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By Scott Brewer and Pat McCarthy

At the invitation of the French Government, APP President, Pat McCarthy and Treasurer, Scott Brewer went to Paris, France. There they represented the APP to provide opinions and advice at meetings held for the important purpose of establishing rules and regulations for the entire country regarding body piercing and tattooing.

Big thanks to Dominique Mincelli of 23 Rue Keller for all of his assistance. Without his help the week would not have nearly been so successful.

The French were very happy to see us, and were most hospitable and polite.

We arrived several days ahead of the meeting in order to see the city of Paris and research the environment for piercing and tattooing. With Dominique's help, the metro (subway) and a good map, we were on our way.

We visited some great studios and some bad ones. It was quickly decided that studios in the US and those in France had lots of similar problems. There were a couple of "full service studios" where you could get pierced, tattooed, and get a haircut all in the same chair. Some studios did not use ultrasonics and some obviously had no concept of cross contamination. Two studios in Paris were outstanding and the piercers were very inquisitive, informative, and looked forward to the meeting.

We also, of course, had to see the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and sample the local wines.

We spoke with one of the doctors prior to the meeting and were pleased to hear that they were very interested in what the APP had offer. There was some controversy about "sterile versus aseptic" techniques but no real decision was reached. We also learned that the term "sterile" can mean varying things in other countries.

The main meeting was held at Hospital Rothschild, and Dr. Jean-Baptiste Guiard-Schmid of the French Public

Health Ministry presided. There were about 40 people in attendance. The majority were piercers and tattoo artists, plus some doctors and officials from the government. We were introduced and asked to speak about the APP. We gave a short address stating the mission of the APP and our purpose for attending the meeting. Many piercers spoke English, and Dominique Mincelli translated for those who didn't.

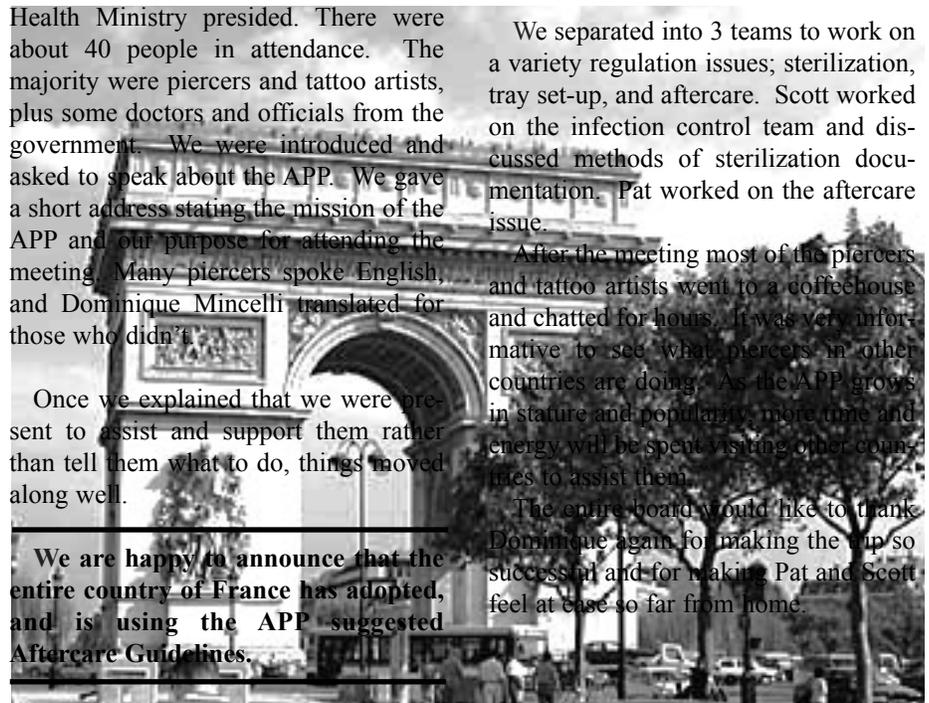
Once we explained that we were present to assist and support them rather than tell them what to do, things moved along well.

**We are happy to announce that the entire country of France has adopted, and is using the APP suggested Aftercare Guidelines.**

We separated into 3 teams to work on a variety regulation issues; sterilization, tray set-up, and aftercare. Scott worked on the infection control team and discussed methods of sterilization documentation. Pat worked on the aftercare issue.

After the meeting most of the piercers and tattoo artists went to a coffeehouse and chatted for hours. It was very informative to see what piercers in other countries are doing. As the APP grows in stature and popularity, more time and energy will be spent visiting other countries to assist them.

The entire board would like to thank Dominique again for making the trip so successful and for making Pat and Scott feel at ease so far from home.



Pat and Scott meet with the French representatives



Dominique Mincelli



Post meeting chat

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One of the fastest growing providers of piercing services in recent times is tattoo studios. Unfortunately, piercers are often hired quickly to fill demand within tattoo studios, rather than by virtue of cleanliness, skill or ability. By the same token piercers often find themselves fighting seemingly losing battles in studios where there is general disdain for piercing or resistance to health and safety upgrades. Despite the potential drawbacks, some of the world's best body modification venues have been born of this union.

For those who are not the proprietors of both businesses or in established partnerships, one of the biggest hurdles is finding like-minded people with whom to work. Because many crucial areas of a studio will often be shared, there must be cooperation between piercers and tattooers. Many piercers will find themselves making proposals to the owners of established tattoo studios, and others search for partners to open a business together. Either way it is important to agree on key points and potential conflicts from the beginning. This will help to prevent misunderstandings down the line. Establishing a studio procedural manual will help greatly to ensure that common areas are treated consistently and appropriately.

There should be a separate room or rooms designated for piercing services only. Actual walls and doors are very important for the separation. Curtains do not allow enough privacy for the client to feel at ease, and they tend to harbor bacteria. Studios with an abundance of space often have piercing on its own floor or in a separate part of the building. A handwashing sink in each room used for services is ideal, but an accessible barrier-free hand washing sink that is not used by the public is an option as well. For those working with less space, arranging the studio can be tricky but with forethought and planning it can be achieved affordably.

Any time either service is offered there must also be adequate sterilization facilities. A separate, enclosed room for processing contaminated equipment is one of the most important parts of any studio. This space would ideally contain a "contaminated" sink, a handwashing sink, an autoclave, and separate ultrasonic units and pre soak bins. Tattoo equipment tends to be saturated with pigment and blood once used. Cleaning piercing equipment (which has relatively low body fluid saturation) in the same ultrasonic is clearly inappropriate. If having two units is not cost effective for the studio, special care must be taken to drain and refill the unit prior to processing contaminated piercing equipment.



**Although piercing and tattooing are sibling industries, particularly in the minds of the general public, they are altogether different processes. It is crucial that there be a clear delineation between the two services within the studio.**

**Most often they are handled separately in terms of book-keeping and business aspects.**

Keeping jewelry display and piercing photos out of the general area where people view tattoo portfolios and/or reference material will give better access to preferred service. Commonly, the public is shopping for both services but it is important not to alienate clients who have an aversion to either piercing or tattooing.

A well-trained (or trainable) and versatile counter person is on the wish list of every business owner. This person can answer both piercing and tattoo questions, set appointments, and generally free-up tattoo artists and piercers to focus on their clients without interruption. When you find a good one, make it worth their while to stay; they are few and far between, and are the public's first impression of your business. Cooperation between employees is important. Obviously many tattooists will only possess basic piercing information, prices, etc.. Likewise, piercers may lack extensive tattoo knowledge. Saying something like, "please allow me to pass this call to someone with that information" or "please let me take a message so we can get you the information you need" is a better reply than "I don't know" which will send the client running. The highest volume of phone calls will tend to be for prices and directions. Posting this basic information near the telephone will allow any person answering the call to readily assist the potential client.

As both industries continue to grow and gain respect, maintaining a professional, comfortable, clean environment is the objective of any dedicated professional. This sense of pride must extend to all of the services offered within the studio. The research, effort, time, and money required to provide truly exceptional services will be rewarded with a better-informed and loyal clientele.

**Bethra Szumski &  
April Williams-Warner**



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Godliness!

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## Classifieds

### Jobs Wanted

Professional and reliable. Hardworking and clean. Good knowledge base, 2 years bloodborne pathogens certification, need to renew CPR and First Aid. I have been running all aspects of my piercing business and shop manager for last year. Looking to work with piercing professionals who are professional, honest, and open. Many accomplishments in shop including putting together Hazard Communications program, Exposure Control Plan, Training Manuals, running spore tests, inventory/ stock, website, too many to list. I am accomplished in many of the basic piercings and looking to advance my skills. Will relocate just about anywhere for the right opportunity. References, resume, portfolio and letters of recommendations shown on request.

I can be reached via e-mail at leaf\_84@hotmail.com

or  
chaosring666@hotmail.com

## Internet Resource Guide

Below is a short listing of just a few of the many internet web sites that may be of interest to those in the piercing community. This guide is not intended to be comprehensive nor to endorse these specific sites. This listing merely serves to provide a jump start to the piercer/web surfer. They include medical web sites, piercing sites, product sites and more.

### [www.apic.org/](http://www.apic.org/)

Association for Professionals in Infection Control

### [www.asmtusa.org/](http://www.asmtusa.org/)

American Society for Microbiology

### [www.bme.freeq.com/index.html](http://www.bme.freeq.com/index.html)

Photos, news, live chat, classifieds, personals, articles, FAQ, glossary, body art event listings, links, even BME radio, etc.

Also photos and information for the hardcore fan on extreme and unusual piercings and other forms of body modification

### [www.bodypiercing.com](http://www.bodypiercing.com)

“is a website dedicated to the art of piercing. You will find piercing shops, piercers, jewelry manufacturers and distributors, equipment suppliers, piercing resources and a classified section. Bodypiercing.com does not recommend any shops or piercers, and does not sell jewelry or supplies. They are merely a source for information, and trust that the shops and piercers have the highest standards of sterilization and training.”

### [www.caretechlabs.com/](http://www.caretechlabs.com/)

care products including Technicare, Tech-2000, satin, etc.

### [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/index.htm)

For information on Hepatitis, the Centers for Disease Control

Includes:

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis C• On-line training

Hepatitis D

Hepatitis E

Resource Center

### [www.cdc.gov/](http://www.cdc.gov/)

the Centers for Disease Control

### [www.faqs.org/faqs/bodyart/](http://www.faqs.org/faqs/bodyart/)

huge comprehensive FAQ on body piercing from the rec.arts.bodyarts folks

### [www.glogerm.com/](http://www.glogerm.com/)

sells a product good for demonstrating proper handwashing, aseptic techniques, and general infection control

### [www.go.com/WebDir/Health](http://www.go.com/WebDir/Health)

a medical encyclopedia

### [www.gojo.com/](http://www.gojo.com/)

and

### [www.healthcare.gojo.com/](http://www.healthcare.gojo.com/)

the makers of Provon, with MSDS sheets, etc.

### [www.members.home.net/wnor/homepage.htm](http://www.members.home.net/wnor/homepage.htm)

anatomy lessons

### [www.newdream.net/beadring/](http://www.newdream.net/beadring/)

“The Bead Ring was formed as a means to unite people, organizations, and web sites interested in the world of body art and modification.”

### [www.osha.gov/](http://www.osha.gov/)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

### [www.piercinglinks.com/](http://www.piercinglinks.com/)

Has well over 2000 links including articles books, magazines, editorials, experiences, employment, interviews, studies, theses, regulations, chat, newsgroups, web rings and more.

### [www.redcross-indy.org/hss/bbp-tattoo/intro1.asp](http://www.redcross-indy.org/hss/bbp-tattoo/intro1.asp)

online Bloodborne Pathogens Training course for Piercers and Tattoo Artists

### [www.safetypeople.co.uk/consult.htm](http://www.safetypeople.co.uk/consult.htm)

### [www.tribalectic.com/Home.as](http://www.tribalectic.com/Home.as)

Comprehensive resource with 3 different forums: one each for piercers, piercees and jewelers. Live chat, magazine, jewelry, shop directory, interviews, photo gallery, video and more.

### [www.woundcare.org/](http://www.woundcare.org/)

information on woundcare

# Consistency is a Virtue

By Susan Preston, President, Professional Program Insurance Brokerage

Does this title sound boring or what? This was not the dynamic title I had been hoping to come up with on this morning of January 1st after a rather “interesting” New Year’s Eve celebration. On further reflection, it came to me that the point I was trying to make was that in at least one way, a body piercer has to be boring: being consistent with general business procedures. Without this, the piercer may not be able to run a successful business.

Recently we had an insurance claim that illustrated this point. A mother brought her 14 year old daughter into a piercing shop for an earlobe piercing where a piercing gun was used. When this particular shop used a piercing gun for ear lobe piercings, they did not follow their regular business procedures. In other words, they did not ask mother and daughter to sign a consent form and they did not give the clients aftercare guidelines which is what they did with all their “professional piercings”.

(Now the purpose of this article is not to go into the issues involved with piercing guns, which I know the APP feels very strongly should not be used. Hopefully readers can skip to the practical matter here which is the point I am looking to make.)

Just before the statute of limitations ran out, the mother filed a lawsuit against my insured piercing shop alleging the daughter’s ear was warped due to the ear lobe piercing.

My insurer started to investigate the claim and found out a few interesting tidbits: First, the mother and daughter could not prove they had actually received their piercing from my insured piercer. Secondly, the mother and daughter had gone to the seashore less than one week after the piercing where they played in the sand. Thirdly, the mother confessed she did not have her daughter use any aftercare procedures when the piercing was done. So you ask, why would an insurance company continue to handle this claim? Why not tell the claimant to go fly a kite?

The first point is no one wants to go to court against a minor. Jurors often will side on behalf of the poor child who is “damaged” for life and then award huge judgments. Legal fees to go to court can be as high as \$10,000/day in many major US cities.

More to the point, the piercing shop was unable to prove they did not do the piercing. Here was the biggest problem of all. The shop owner, under sworn deposition, said in the case of piercing guns, he did not make anyone sign a consent and he only offered to “sell” them aftercare kits. The owner did not keep records of ANY ear piercing clients where he used a gun. He also did not give them any kind of handwritten aftercare guidelines. Since he did not make any real money on ear piercing gun clients, he would only sell them aftercare kits, which this client did not elect to buy.

This child’s ear can be repaired at a cost of about \$15,000. To date we have paid close to another \$10,000 or so in handling and legal fees. If this is settled, which still remains doubtful, the cost will be probably near \$50,000-\$100,000 to cover legal and any “damages” for pain and suffering.

The piercer’s case would have been much stronger if the shop had followed consistent procedures for every single client. No matter what type of piercing a piercer does, and no matter what age group the client is, all must be treated equally. Every piercing client needs to sign a consent form and be given aftercare instructions. The piercer should make enough money from a piercing to be able to follow professional procedures when dealing with clients. If not, discontinue the service or raise prices for it. Without being boringly consistent, the piercer may not be in a position to survive a legal challenge.

## ..Conference 2001 continued

The room rate is \$99.00 per night. We would strongly advise you to book immediately, as the rooms are expected to sell out quickly. Do not book your room through Bally’s website because you will not get the discounted rate.

If you are an APP member in good standing (dues are paid, with a video on file) you can deduct \$50.00 from the conference cost. Also, there is a discount for early registration, before March 15, 2001. To encourage international participation, we are charging less for attendees not within the continental U.S..

**You can register online at [www.safepiercing.org](http://www.safepiercing.org) using your MasterCard or Visa.**

**For vendor information contact Pat McCarthy at: (614) 297-9925**

**For conference information visit the website at [www.safepiercing.org](http://www.safepiercing.org) or call Bethra Szumski at: (404) 315-6925**

## ...APHA 2000 continued

We also had a jewelry display that showed high quality body jewelry, and poor, unsuitable jewelry for comparison. The Board distributed a tremendous pile of literature including our Aftercare Sheets, Choosing a Piercer brochure, and the Troubleshooting brochure.

Vice President, Steve Joyner presented a seminar: Are Piercing Studios a Health Risk? This was targeted at Health Inspectors and involved a Power Point presentation that was created by board members Pat McCarthy, Dr. Jack Ward, and Scott Brewer. The content focused on how to inspect a Piercing Studio.

Many attendees approached to ask specific questions about body piercing, and some came to us for general information. All in all, it was another very successful visit to the APHA Conference.



**E**volution body piercing is located along the historic Route 66 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The piercing-only studio, founded in April of 1999, was built with equal consideration for aesthetic beauty and for health and safety.

The Southwestern United States seems to have an abundance of artisans, and it is evident that these resources have been well utilized within the studio. The lobby boasts a waterfall and handcrafted display cases with counter tops bearing the appearance of still water. One can easily imagine the sense of ease that customers will feel as they step in off the street.

By virtue of proper planning and the blessing of sufficient space Evolution has both "clean" and "dirty" equipment processing areas. Glass windows allow clients to view these two areas safely from the lobby. All doors within the studio are double hinged to allow easy hands-free access; the door to the 'dirty' area is painted red. Piercing rooms are tidy and well lit and each has a hand-washing sink.

Co-founder, Crystal Sims, attended Gauntlet training seminars in March of 1995, after having served a one-year apprenticeship at Kent Fazekas' studio, Body Accents. She pierced off and on over the years before undertaking her full time position at Evolution.

Co-founder, Sean Taylor, attended the Fakir piercing workshop in January, 1994. He then worked at a piercing studio in Albuquerque until 1996. He took a hiatus from piercing to focus on jewelry manufacturing, and he now holds a position piercing part time in the studio.

Myra Shoultz, who attended Gauntlet seminars in 1996, after her one-year apprenticeship at Body Accents. She is a long-standing APP member and has joined the crew as a counter assistant and part time piercer.

And also Tyler Cancro, who has been with the studio since it opened its doors. He is working as an apprentice.

There is a free flow of information among the crew, and positive interaction with piercers across the country. It's not hard to see that these folks have done their homework!

"It's our job to help break down the stereotypes directed at piercing. We see a large variety of professionals here. It's important to provide a comfortable environment for everyone. I'm really rewarded to see people arrive excited and leave even more so! I can't think of anything I would rather do," says Crystal.

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**"It's our job to help break down the stereotypes directed at piercing".**

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Other Evolution staff includes:

Noah Babcock, who attended Dr. Kris Sperry's seminar on disease transmission in 1997 and has been piercing for 5 years.

**Evolution**  
**4517 Central N.E.**  
**Albuquerque, NM 87108**  
**505-255-4567**





As of late August 2000 a new body piercing community has taken form on the Internet.

**Tribalectic --www.tribalectic.com--** was founded and created by three friends: a body piercer, an avid piercee, and a tech wizard. Together, Damien Hoffman, Jason Malec and Drew Michael are aiming to fill a digital void and provide both the general public and professional piercers a place to call home on the Web.

Tribalectic offers a host of body piercing resources. The major component of the website is the Pierced, Piercer, and Jeweler Communities. These communities offer chatrooms, forums, FAQ's, pictures of featured piercings, piercing myths, a piercer employment directory and, for the general public, information about "What to Expect" from a piercing experience.

"We want piercees to feel as though they can come to an objective place to get all the information they'll need whether they're considering a first pier-

ing or want to talk about their twentieth," comments Jason, a pierced Internet surfer who was unsatisfied with body piercing information online. Jason continues, "We also constructed the Piercer Community to be password protected so professional piercers can have a place to exchange information privately with their colleagues." This goal to deliver the body piercing community with top-of-the-line resources keeps Tribalectic innovating and asking its community what they want next.

Tribalectic also reserves space in their communities to post information provided by the Association of Professional Piercers. "As a piercer, I used a lot of the guidelines and information the APP has to offer ... I think the general public should also be able to access information the APP finds necessary for all piercees. Elayne Angel has been extremely helpful and interested in helping Tribalectic fulfill this goal."

In addition to information, Tribalectic aspires to bring piercers and shops the

benefits of Internet business solutions that have eluded the piercing industry to date. Drew, whose interests and education include both computer programming and business, leads the team in their effort to help the lagging piercing industry conduct business like other companies have been for the past five years. "Other industries have saved extraordinary amounts of time and money bringing their supply and inventory management operations to the Web ... we hope to bring these same savings to the piercing industry as well."

Tribalectic also produces a monthly online magazine that interviews piercers, jewelers, and shops. You can also find articles about popular issues in the body piercing world or simply read a music review. Tribalectic's interactive nature encourages piercers and piercees alike to submit stories and artwork to be featured in the magazine.

Whether you're looking to ask a fellow piercer a quick question about technique, hoping to offer your clients a place to convene online, or want to learn how to make your shop more efficient in the digital age, Tribalectic is a great place to start.

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**PROVIDING EDUCATION FOR  
THE MODIFICATION COMMUNITY**

# The President's Corner --- Patrick McCarthy

Well, the current board is half-way through its three-year term and a whole lot is going on. Much of what we have been doing is behind-the-scenes kind of stuff. You will be able to observe some of our efforts at the Annual Conference, in April.

The new manual will be coming out. It is entirely updated and completely different than the previous one. We will be offering the manual in a hard-copy version as a book comprised of 4 separate mini-books. We also plan to debut the new manual as an interactive CD disk.

You are reading the POINT that will again begin to come out on a quarterly basis. We have produced several new brochures to educate the public, including: Choosing Your Piercer; Troubleshooting For You and Your Healthcare Professional; and two Aftercare Guidelines Brochures (one for oral piercing and the other for facial and body piercings). The Aftercare brochures are a first for our industry, establishing a benchmark for professional piercing care. The Troubleshooting brochure contains an illustrated section on jewelry removal hints and tips to help medical personnel perform safe jewelry removal, and advice on when it is truly necessary.

We are in the process of producing a 4-color medical-style illustrated full-size

poster showing cross sections of the body with properly placed piercings.

We are also in the final stages of editing two videos; one on how body piercing jewelry is removed that is geared towards doctors, nurses, and corrections facilities personnel on how to safely remove jewelry, and how body jewelry operates. And, the second one on how to inspect a body art studio, that is geared towards health department officials and prospective APP members about how to set-up and inspect studios.

We have established and published a position on ear-piercing stud guns, one on oral piercings, and a policy on piercing minors. The more unified we are as an organization on policies and procedures, the stronger and more professional we appear to the public, and the more easily and widely our messages will spread.

The web site has been updated as a working tool for the board. It now holds many databases that were not established before. There is more information available on the APP web site than ever before.

The APP Survey on Body Piercing is the first of its kind. If you did not complete a survey at last year's conference, and have not participated by taking the survey on-line, please log-on and do so. This way we will establish a broad and accurate baseline with as many partici-

pants as possible to answer our questions. The data we are collecting ranges from usual jewelry sizes and styles to suggested care products to average numbers of piercings per day and pay ranges. It is very interesting to see what your colleagues are up to! Results of the 2000 survey are posted on the site.

I don't want to talk too much about the 2001 conference except to say that the bigger the conference gets the more time and effort it takes to produce. The Vendor Exposition was so successful last year that many more companies want to come this year. So, we are making the Expo bigger and better, which in turn requires more time.

You will also see throughout this POINT other things we have done. The Board recognizes the fact that the newsletter and Manual have been delayed in coming out, but you will soon see why!

We would like to get feedback from YOU, members of the piercing industry, about what you want us to do, what your needs are, and what direction you want the APP to take. You can contact me directly at [president@safepiercing.org](mailto:president@safepiercing.org).

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at the Conference.

Patrick McCarthy

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## How to Contact the APP

Requests for general information and spore tests should be sent to: Association of Professional Piercers, PMB 286, 5446 Peachtree Industrial Blvd., Chamblee, GA 30341 or fax to (614) 297-6855.

To contact the following members of the board:

### Office of the President

Pat McCarthy c/o Piercology  
872 N. High St.  
Columbus, OH 43215

### Office of the Secretary

Bethra Szumski c/o Virtue and Vice  
2271 Cheshire Bridge Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30324

### Outreach Coordinator

Elayne Angel c/o Rings of Desire  
1128 Decatur St.  
New Orleans, LA 70116

or visit The APP Website at: [www.safepiercing.org](http://www.safepiercing.org)

# Latex Reactions in the Modification Industry

*Understanding Why They Occur and How Best to Prevent Them*

by David Vidra and Derek Lowe

**A**s within the medical community, the piercing and tattooing industries have seen a large increase in the number of practitioners who are either sensitive or allergic to latex gloves and other products. This increase in latex allergies can be attributed to several factors.

One of the primary reasons for the increase in the number of individuals allergic to latex is the institution of Universal Precautions. Universal Precautions has resulted in the increase in the number of latex gloves being used and being manufactured. A secondary factor is the manufacturing process itself and the quality of latex used in the manufacturing process.

There are several different types of reactions that can occur. It is important to understand the types of reactions in order to determine if the reaction is truly a reaction to latex or if the reaction is due to some other factor. Determining the cause of the reaction makes it possible to determine what course of action will prove to be most beneficial.

The following are the most common types of reactions:

## A. Irritant Contact Dermatitis

### Symptoms

Typical symptoms of Irritant Contact Dermatitis are dry, flaky, irritated areas of skin, most commonly the hands.

### Common Causes

This condition can be caused by frequent hand-washing and drying as well as not properly drying hands after hand-washing. In addition, exposure to powders used on latex gloves can also contribute to this type of reaction. It is important to realize that this type of reaction is not a true allergic reaction.

## B. Allergic Contact Dermatitis (delayed hypersensitivity)

### Symptoms

Symptoms for this type of reaction often resemble a reaction to poison ivy. The skin will often develop oozing skin blisters. This condition often appears 24-48 hours after exposure and may spread to areas that do not come in contact with latex.

## Common causes

This condition is most commonly caused by chemicals added to the latex during harvesting, processing or the manufacturing process. It is important to realize that some of the same chemicals used in processing natural rubber latex gloves may also be used in processing synthetic rubber gloves such as Nitrile.

## C. Latex Allergy (immediate hypersensitivity)

### Symptoms

The types of symptoms that appear due to this kind of reaction vary depending upon the level of sensitivity. Reactions may vary from mild (severe skin redness, development of hives and/or itching) to more severe (difficulty breathing, coughing, wheezing, sneezing, runny nose, and/or scratchy throat). In some severe cases, a life-threatening shock may develop. Immediate hypersensitivity reactions typically occur within minutes of exposure to latex.

### Common causes

This type of reaction occurs as a result of a direct allergy to latex proteins. It is often difficult to determine what level of exposure will cause this type of reaction. In addition, this type of reaction is something that often develops over time, as the individual is frequently exposed to latex.

The issue of reactions to latex gloves in our industry has become an issue which can no longer be ignored. Reactions of this nature have the potential to affect our ability to work safely or to work at all. It is important to be able to recognize these types of reactions and to be able to prevent the likelihood of such reactions occurring. One of the most effective ways to prevent allergic reactions to latex is to minimize the use of latex products, especially gloves. One common, and very effective substitute for latex gloves are gloves made of Nitrile. Nitrile is a synthetic rubber that contains no natural rubber latex. Nitrile provides a barrier protection equal, if not better, than that of latex.

However, as was mentioned previously, keep in mind that Nitrile is still a form of rubber, and as such, may still be processed using some of the same chemicals used to process latex gloves.

If latex gloves are used, the following precautions can be taken to reduce the occurrence of various reactions:

- Use latex gloves which are powder-free. The powder can be absorbed into the skin, carrying with it latex proteins. While powdered-free latex gloves may be slightly more expensive, they can greatly reduce the potential for reactions.

- In addition, if hands are dried thoroughly after washing, donning of powder-free latex gloves is no more difficult than donning latex gloves that are powdered.

- Wash your hands both before and after the procedure. This will help remove latex proteins that become embedded in the skin.

- Wash your hands using a mild soap and dry them thoroughly.

- Keep your skin in good conditions using lotions and/or creams. There are many different products available which are designed specifically for the purpose of maintaining the health of the skin on the hands. Be sure that any hand lotions used are not oil-based, as the oil will break down the latex, increasing your potential for exposure to pathogens as well as increasing the amount of latex absorbed into your skin.

For further information, feel free to contact us at:

**Body Work Productions, Inc.** voice: (216) 623-0744 fax: (216) 623-0745  
bodyworkprod@earthlink.net

**Health Educators, Inc.** voice: (216) 623-0815 healtheducators@earthlink.net  
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Association of Professional Piercers



Aftercare Guidelines for Oral Piercings

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Body Piercing TROUBLESHOOTING: For you and your Healthcare Professional

with jewelry removal tips

This pamphlet has been produced by the Association of Professional Piercers (APP). We are an international nonprofit educational, health and safety organization dedicated to the dissemination of critical information about body piercing to piercers, health care providers, and to the general public. The APP membership is made up of piercers who meet both personal and environmental criteria, companies who provide crucial goods and services to the industry, and members of the general public and the medical community who support the efforts of the APP. The following information is based on a combination of vast professional experience, research, extensive clinical body piercing practice, and common sense. It has been compiled with the input and assistance of medical professionals who are also trained, experienced piercers.



For additional information contact us at :

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## Jewelry Removal

There are three basic styles of body jewelry and many variations on those styles. The three styles are a bead ring, (fig. A) captive bead (fig. B) and circular barbells/barbell (fig. C).

There is never any need to cut body jewelry for removal. Even momentary removal of jewelry from a healing piercing can result in amazingly rapid closure of the piercing, and make reinsertion difficult or impossible. Removal of jewelry in the presence of an infection may result in an abscess. In the event there is a localized, draining infection, quality jewelry should be left in place to allow for passage of matter to the surface.

On a bead ring, the bead is attached to one side of the ring. To open the ring for removal, simply twist the ring open. Grasp the ring on each side of the bead, pull gently and one end will pop out of the bead. By pushing one end away from you and pulling the other end toward you to open the ring like a spiral.



Fig. A

On a captive bead ring, the bead is held in by the tension of the ring. Grasp the ring with one hand as close to the bead as you can and with the other hand grasp the bead. Gently pull the ring and bead in opposite directions and the bead should snap out of the ring. Twist the ring a little (as in opening a bead ring) and rotate the jewelry to remove the ring.



Fig. B

Barbells and circular barbells have threaded ends which can be unscrewed. Like most threaded objects, they tighten to the right and loosen to the left. On this type of jewelry one or both of the ends will come unscrewed.

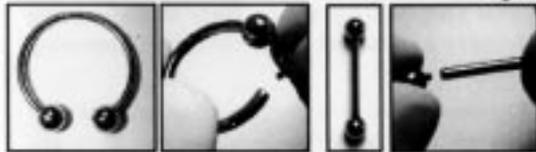


Fig. C

Ring Expanding Pliers or External Snap Ring Pliers can be used to spread a ring open enough to pop a bead in or out. Place the head of the pliers inside of the ring and gently squeeze on the handle to spread the jaws outward, opening the ring just enough to pop the ball out.



Please refer to the APP Aftercare Guidelines sheets for detailed information on the approved and accepted means of optimally caring for healing piercings.

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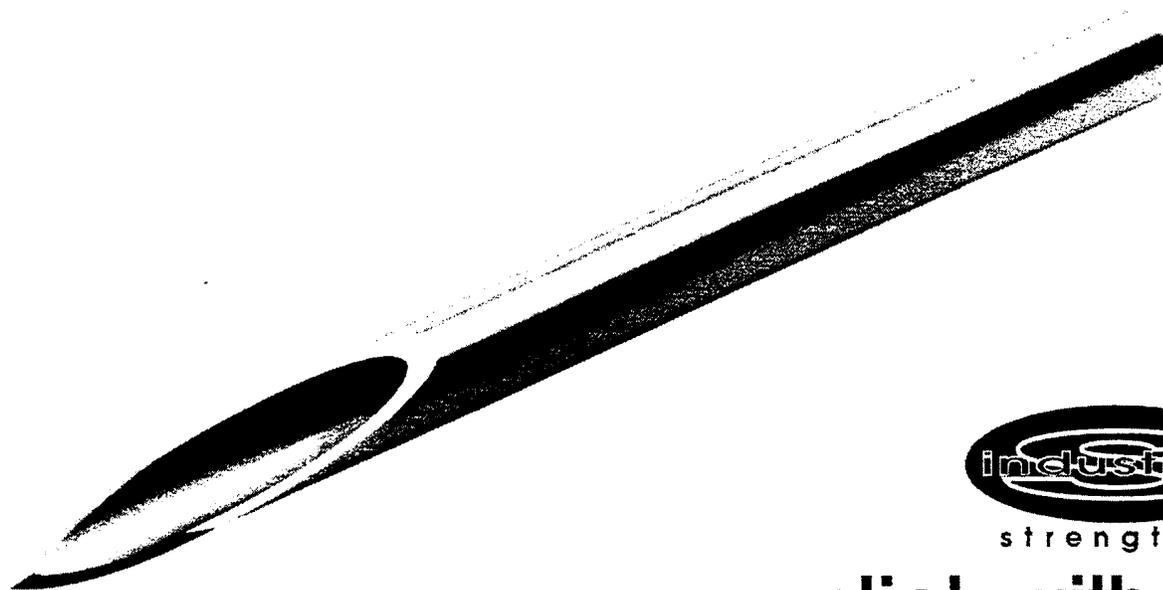


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