

THE POINT

The Official Newsletter for The Association of Professional Piercers

First International APP Conference Held in Amsterdam

The first full-scale APP Conference and Expo held outside of the United States took place November 5-8, 2002 at the Beurs van Berlage in Amsterdam. It was attended by piercers from far and wide. They came from Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, England, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Israel, South Africa, the U. S., and of course, the Netherlands.

The venue was a magnificent, enormous old edifice that formerly functioned as the local Commodities Exchange. It is a brick structure with numerous archways and extremely high ceilings built by a famous Dutch architect. It contained eye-catching masterpieces of carved wood and marble, stained glass and ornamental tile. It proved to be an excellent venue for our purposes. The staff was very polite, helpful, and attentive to our needs.

The APP has always been described as an international organization. However, with the exception of a one-day educational event in London in 1997, we had yet to reach out to the piercers beyond the borders of the United States. It was obvious that the time had come to do so.

We had only about 3 months notice from the time the venue was secured until the event took place. But word got out and over 100 piercers were present. The vast majority attended every course that was offered. The classes included Bedside Manner, Oral and Facial Anatomy, Body Anatomy, Jewelry Standards/Metals, Appropriate Studio Set-up, First Aid/CPR, Infection Control/Sterilization, Aftercare/Healing, Anthropology, and How to Form an Organization Like the APP.

Thanks to the Volunteer Translators who were present in the classrooms and

translated English to Dutch, Italian, Portuguese, Finnish, French, German, Hebrew, and Spanish, so that all who attended could get the most out of each class. It was exciting to have conference-goers who spoke so many different languages, but it presented a challenge to the speakers who had to slow down their presentations to accommodate the Translators. Good job everyone!



We received tremendous feedback from many attendees that the information was extremely useful and welcome. A number of piercers admitted that they thought they already knew pretty much everything they needed to know, but then were amazed with the education they received. Some told us that as a result of what they learned, they now had plans to update their studios and procedures.

Several APP members from a few European countries spoke to the Board about forming organizations in their own areas. That was part of the idea behind hosting this international conference. Because laws and product availability vary so much from country to country, it makes sense to form regional organizations with specific guidelines that can meet such laws.

We also held a Vendor Expo with jewelers from across Europe and also Mexico, Brazil and the U.S. showing a wide variety of offerings from hand worked natural materials such as stone, wood, nuts and horn to slick high-tech metals and plastics. Most vendors reported that they did more business than they anticipated. Vendors and piercers alike seemed pleased with the outcome.

On Thursday evening we held a reception party for all the attendees and vendors. It took place at the beautiful Cafe located within the Beurs van Berlage building. Snacks and sweets were served and drinks were available.

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ATTENTION Manufacturers and Businesses

The Point is a quarterly newsletter. It is the only newsletter dedicated to the piercing industry. We print 2000 copies of each issue, have a direct mailing list of over 750, which consist mainly of piercing, tattoo studios and health departments. The newsletters are also distributed to potential members or anyone who is interested. With the new 3-hole-punch format, it will continue to be a viable resource and should be part of your advertising budget. The POINT can also be viewed as PDF files on our website, increasing the visibility of your company. Nowhere else can you hit the specialized piercing market.

Advertising Specifications

Type	Inches W x H	Diagram	1 issue	6 issues
inside front cover	7.25" x 9.75"		\$400.00	\$350.00
inside back cover	7.25" x 9.75"		\$400.00	\$350.00
full page	7.25" x 9.75"		\$350.00	\$325.00
half page-horizontal	7.25" x 4.75"		\$200.00	\$180.00
quarter page	3.25" x 4.75"		\$90.00	\$80.00
double quarter column-vertical	2.25" x 4.75"		\$50.00	\$45.00

Contact Bethra Szumski at (404) 315-6925 to place your advertisement in The Point. The Point is created on a Mac using QuarkXpress 5.0, and Photoshop 6.0. Acceptable formats for ads are black and white or grayscale jpeg, gif, eps, tiff, pict, pds or PDF files. If you are sending a digital file please include or embed the fonts. Email ads as attachments to beastworks@earthlink.net or mail them on cd or zip. Camera ready art at 600 dpi or better is acceptable if you don't have a digital file. Mail to: Beast c/o Rings of Desire 1128 Decatur St. New Orleans, LA 70116. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your media returned.

APP International Conferencecontinued from page 1

People worked to break down the barriers of their different languages and a roar of conversation was heard. The party was such a big hit that the bar ran out of beer after the first two hours. More was quickly brought in to keep the party rolling.

Extra big thanks to Wildcat Germany and Cold Steel International for sponsoring our reception. We truly appreciate your involvement and support. The party was superb!

The raffle drawing was also held at the party and attendees were clearly thrilled to be the winners of the many generous donations offered by our supportive vendors.

Very special thanks go out to all of the kind and generous vendors who donated their goods to make the entire event such a smashing success. There were some big prizes:

(E=Euros, which are valued nearly the same as Dollars)

AMERICAN BODY ART: E1500 jewelry pack

ANATOMETAL: Two gift packs at \$250.00

BARBARELLA: Three piercing needle gift packs valued at E180 each

BODY PIERCING CLINIC: Two \$50.00 Gift Certificates to be redeemed at Expo

COLD STEEL INTERNATIONAL, LTD.: One Cold steel gift pack at £2000

(approximately \$3100.00); one at £250

(approximately \$400.00); two at £100

(approximately \$160.00) and one at £50

(approximately \$80.00)

CUSTOM STEEL: Two sets of ear weights (value \$250.00 per set)

DMD CREATOR: One gold barbell

GI ARTE: One E100 certificate

GLASSWEAR : One E300 certificate, one \$100.00 certificate, and three E50 certificates

GOOD ART: One \$500.00 certificate, two \$200.00 certificates, and three \$100.00 certificates

INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH: One \$2000.00 gift pack, one \$1000.00 gift pack, one \$500.00 gift pack, 10 \$100.00 gift packs and five \$100.00 borneo Joe gift packs

ORGANIC: One \$50.00 gift certificate and one E50 gift certificate and two Tee shirts

TATTOOED KINGPIN: One \$100.00 gift certificate

PRESTIGE MEDICAL: Studio Infection Control Audit with written report (within Europe) or £500 voucher towards a Century 3 Vacuum Autoclave

SIN-A-MATIC: Two \$50.00 coupons

WILDCAT GERMANY: 2 large and 2 small replica shrunken heads

ZOOMORPHIC: \$100.00 to be redeemed at Expo

Some prizes were added after the conference program was printed, therefore we apologize for any omissions or inaccuracies in this listing. We intend to recognize and express our appreciation to each and every participant who donated. The raffle was a big success. Thank you all!

Thanks also to our AI D. scholars who assisted the Board with everything from staffing the registration area to making copies, translating and more. They did a great job and were a huge help to the busy Board Members. Big thanks to each of you:

Leanka Platt from France

Charley Fallart from UK

Ginge from UK

Marius Bosman from South Africa

The Board held a meeting the day after the conference was over and then flew back to the US, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to staff a booth at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Conference. (See related article in this issue).

All in all the First International Conference and Expo was a tremendous success and we plan to hold it again next year. Ultimately, our aim is to assist the overseas APP members to host their own conferences in the future.

Thanks to everyone who participated! We look forward to seeing you there next year.

*** More photos on page 18**



APP Educates at APHA

By Elayne Angel

APP Board members again staffed a booth at the American Public Health Association's annual Conference. This year it was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on November 10-13 2002.

This event is extremely well attended by many thousands of medical and dental health care providers, public health officials, health inspectors, health educators and myriad medical professionals of every description and background.

Most of the booths at the Expo are of a dry, serious, academic nature. Our slick black display with photos of modern and tribal people sporting piercings, purple draped table and matching purple carpeting was eye-catching to many who walked by us.

As with the other more recent APHA Conferences we received many personal inquiries compared to years ago when we first hosted the booth at this event. Lots of doctors and nurses asked questions about their own, their friends' and their children's piercings. Some wished to have referrals to APP members for piercings they planned to obtain in the future. For others we answered inquiries about sterilization, appropriate studio set up, proper high-quality jewelry, and more. We spoke to a number of Health Inspectors who required additional, specific information to perform their jobs effectively.

We distributed the brand new brochure on **ORAL PIERCING RISKS AND SAFETY MEASURES** (debuted in this issue of the POINT) plus stacks of pamphlets including **PICKING YOUR PIERCER, TROUBLESHOOTING FOR YOU AND YOUR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL**, and the **AFTERCARE** brochures. We also handed out numerous CD's of the APP Procedure Manual and membership information to interested parties.

We had a box of jewelry containing samples of appropriate high quality body jewelry and for comparison, poor, unsuitable jewelry to graphically show the differences, and to demonstrate how barbells unscrew, how captive beads are removed, etc. Many attendees attempted to purchase some of this display jewelry but it was not for sale; just for educational purposes.

As before, a few people failed to comprehend why we were there but after a brief discussion of the many necessary safety measures to prevent disease transmission they understood the possible implications to Public Health if piercing isn't done properly.

It was great to have Steve Joyner, previous APP Vice President, attend to help staff our booth. He is seasoned at working APHA and helped to round out the crew because most of the Board was flying back from the Amsterdam APP Conference as APHA was starting. Kudos to the Board Members who managed to get through the entire Conference and Expo in Amsterdam (see related article in this issue) and then fly straight to Philly to work APHA. That takes some stamina!

Extra thanks to Outreach Coordinator Megg Mass and APP member Jim Weber of Infinite Body Piercing in Philadelphia for putting up all of the attending Board members. They were fantastic hosts, and were very kind to open their home to us.

All in all, the APHA Conference was once again a big success in our mission to disseminate information.

Piercer's News of the Weird

We have a new feature in this issue and wish to thank everyone who contributed. There are more stories on file, so if you submitted one but don't see it here, look for it in a future issue of THE POINT.

If you have a good "Piercer's News of the Weird" story, email it to POINT editor Elayne Angel at: medical@safepiercing.org

The Classic

One day a guy comes in to get his eyebrow pierced. He'd been pierced before and apparently never had any problems handling the procedure. He brought a buddy with him who had never had anything like that done so that he could check it out and decide whether he wanted to get one or not. This was going to be fun.

We get into the piercing room, and I prep the gentleman getting pierced as his friend stands against the wall and watches. Prep is done. I inform the client that I'll be changing my gloves, and then we will go ahead and pierce him if he's ready. He takes a deep breath, gives me a grin, and says yes. We all know that the anticipation for a piercing can be a lot for some people to handle, and we all know that sometimes people can get themselves so worked up that they pass out before anything even happens. Well, as my back is turned, I hear a thud and turn around to see-not the guy getting pierced-but his buddy that was watching, looking up at me on all fours. "Woouoah! You all right there?" The piercee says as his friend looks around kinda dazed.

He hadn't fallen all the way down, and even though it was obvious that he was a little embarrassed we had a little laugh and relocated him to a chair in the lobby. Needless to say, he decided that he definitely wasn't going to be getting pierced any time soon!

Jeremiah Toller
Ground Zero, Muncie, IN

.....continued on page 9

The Results of the APP Survey of Piercers

Here are the results of The APP's online survey of piercers. The purpose of this survey was to receive input from the membership on usual practices and preferences. We have compiled these results from the 388 responses which were received.

1. How did you learn to pierce?		7. In order to be pierced clients must:		16a. Do you provide or are you provided medical insurance?	
A. An Apprenticeship	221	A. Be completely sober	22	A. Yes	121
B. Workshop	24	B. Have eaten within 4 hours	7	B. No	138
C. Self Taught	118	C. Present proper identification	17		
D. Other	22	D. All of the above	314	16b. Do you provide or are you provided Paid vacations?	
2a. Do you offer apprenticeships?		E. None of the above	18	A. Yes	109
A. Yes	162	8. Do you use APP aftercare guidelines?		B. No	244
B. No	212	A. Yes	275	16c. Do you provide or are you provided Bonuses?	
3. If you received an apprenticeship, how long did it last?		B. No	98	A. Yes	176
A. 1-6 Months	98	9. How do you prepare jewelry for insertion into a fresh piercing?		B. No	177
B. 6mos-1year	107	A. Cold soak	36	17. Jewelry is selected based on:	
C. 1-2 years	54	B. bulk autoclave+cold soak	46	A. Whatever the client wants	40
D. Longer than 2 years	25	C. Individually packed/ autoclaved	277	B. The client's anatomy	229
4. On average, how many pairs of gloves do you use, from start to finish?		D. Statim	14	C. Standard size for the body part	98
A. 1	34	10. Do you insert externally threaded jewelry into fresh piercings?		D. Available backstock	8
B. 2	73	A. Yes	142	18. Do you pierce minors?	
C. 3	101	B. No	232	A. Yes	307
D. 4	82	11. What other services, if any, are offered in your facility?		B. No	71
E. 5 or more	85	A. Tattoo	236	19. If yes, do you require parental consent?	
5a. What product/s do you use to sanitize skin prior to: body/facial piercing?		B. Hair or beauty	23	A. Yes	290
A. Technicare	128	C. Retail other than piercing related	43	B. No	37
B. Iodine based product	53	D. Scarification/branding	39	20. How long have you been piercing professionally?	
C. Iodine/alcohol	95	12. How many employees, or contract workers are working in the PIERCING portion of your studio?		A. 0-1yr	108
D. Iodine/BZK	33	A. 1	141	B. 1-5Yrs	172
E. Other	61	B. 2-3	167	C. 5-10yrs	62
5b. What product/s do you use to sanitize skin prior to: oral piercing?		C. 4-6	46	D. Over 10 yrs	29
A. Listerine	163	D. 7 or more	16	21. What is the maximum number of piercings you would do on a person/same time?	
B. Tech-2000	95	13. Do you have a web site?		A. 1	22
C. Biotene	45	A. Yes	151	B. 2-3	268
D. Other Alcohol Rinse	11	B. No	224	C. 4-6	48
E. Other Alcohol Free Rinse	53	14. Piercers are paid how?		D. 6+	31
6a. What do you use to mark placement for body/facial piercings?		A. Commission	202	22. Clients are provided with:	
A. Single use pen	45	B. Hourly	32	A. Verbal aftercare	18
B. Single use Surgical marker	116	C. Salary	46	B. Written aftercare	23
C. Multiple use pen or marker	107	D. Salary or Hourly+Comm.	77	C. Both A and B	327
D. Single use toothpick/ gentian violet	106	15. What is your gross annual income from piercing?		D. Neither A nor B	11
6b. What do you use to mark placement for oral piercings?		A. 10,000-25,000	161	23. Do you sell care products for piercings in your studio?	
A. Single use pen/marker	113	B. 25,000-35,000	85	A. Yes	280
B. Multiple use pen/marker	36	C. 35,000-45,000	42	B. No	99
C. Single use toothpick/ gentian violet	164	D. 45,000+	51		

Florida Arrests

By Crystal Sims

On the evening of Friday, February 15, 2002 police arrived at Needle Fetish, a body piercing studio in Jacksonville Florida, with a search warrant to look for evidence of body piercers practicing medicine without a license.

Owner Alva Richcreek and manager Steve Truitt were working at the time, and three female customers were in the lobby. The customers were searched and then released, and the police began looking around. Truitt said the officers didn't seem to know what they were looking for. They would pick things up, ask what they were used for, and move on. The police left the studio with pictures from Truitt's portfolio (including a tongue splitting in progress, implants under the skin, and photos of female genital piercings), three scalpels, some hub needles, implant jewelry, and a jar containing human labia preserved in formaldehyde. Truitt explains that the labia were a gift from a friend, the implant jewelry was not on display or for sale, and the tongue splitting and implants pictured had taken place in New Mexico, not Florida. The officers took all of the studio's release forms and left without making any arrests.

On March 21, around 1:30 p.m. police officers arrived at Needle Fetish and at Richcreek's residence to make arrests. Steve Truitt and Alva Richcreek were admitted to jail at 3:35 p.m. and 3:45 p.m. The press release issued at 3:53 p.m. stated that

each had been charged with one count of Unlicensed Practice of Medicine, the procedure in question being a "labial reduction." The press knew the charges before Truitt and Richcreek did, because as they were told in Florida the police are not always required to read you your Miranda rights or tell you what crime you have been charged with.

The arrests made several news broadcasts, one of which cited a possible complication being death from anaphylactic shock due to the anesthetic used, if the client didn't die from hemorrhaging or massive infection first. In response, Truitt says he never uses anesthetics for any procedures, and none had been found in the studio.

Truitt was released on bond the morning after the arrest, and Richcreek was released later that day on his own recognition. Charges were filed a few weeks later although Truitt says no specific incident was listed. For Truitt, criminal charges were dropped. His case was resolved in May and his settlement required that he stop the unlicensed practice of medicine and give up any ownership of any business or property in Florida within 60 days, and give up his Florida body piercing license within 30 days. He was also required to pay his court costs and filing fees, which totaled around \$365.

Richcreek's case was resolved Friday, November 18th. His sen-

tence includes four years criminal probation (which he describes as "complete loss of rights") and he is to stop the unlicensed practice of medicine. In addition, he has to pay \$1000 to the Sheriff's Investigation Fund, court costs totaling over \$300 and restitution. Richcreek stated that all of this was the result of a consent form they found for a "hood split" performed by Steve Truitt.

Richcreek was aware this procedure had taken place, and as the owner of the studio where it was performed, he was considered just as guilty as if he had performed the procedure himself.

Needle Fetish is no longer in business, and Richcreek believes the studio's demise was a direct result of the media. He also noted that while the media was attacking his studio, another Jacksonville piercing studio was advertising "exotic and erotic implants" in the paper, yet that studio was never questioned or searched.

Alva Richcreek is currently working for another body art studio in Florida, while Steve Truitt has returned to New Mexico where he also continues to work as a body piercer.

INFORMED CONSENT

Over the years the APP has been criticized for not taking a stronger stand against more extreme body modifications. Yet others have disparaged us for what they feel is an anti-mod stance. Although during it's first few years the APP was very vocal about specific mods and procedures, it has held a position of neutrality about non-piercing body arts for some time.

This singleness of our focus has made the association more effective in dealing with piercing-related legislation and educational endeavors.

However, an area that is universal to all forms of body modification including piercing and all the more extreme options is the issue of informed consent.

With some of the long-term effects of more invasive procedures such as implants now beginning to come to the fore it doesn't appear that full disclosure of information is always being made available to would-be clients as it becomes known.

The irony of this is that most prospective clients for implants work within the tattoo or piercing industries or are seasoned body art enthusiasts. It would seem that this group more than any other would be capable of weighing information and assuming responsibility for the potential risks. Yet disclosure of this information is often not taking place. It is important that there be available as much as possible in the way of facts to each person so that that they have an accurate basis for their consent.

Some modifications are quite new and outcome is uncertain or truly unknown. In these cases it is appropriate for the practitioner to stress that the procedure is essentially experimental and results are unpredictable, due to a lack of data.

I believe it is the right of any adult to modify their body in any way they see fit. But, if full and complete information is not provided prior to a procedure, in my opinion, consent is negated. This is not to say that implants or experimental forms of modification or their practitioners are 'bad' just that a focus on ethical practice is called for under these circumstances.

The following are things to be considered before receiving a potentially invasive modification:

1. What are the experiences of others with the procedure? Speak to at least two clients of the practitioner you are considering.
2. How experienced is the practitioner? Does he/she have pictures of healed work? Is he/she willing to provide statistics on the successes and failures of the procedures he/she has performed? Is he/she willing to refer you to a Plastic Surgeon if your request is out of their legal or technical scope?
3. Will there be follow up care should you experience difficulty? How available is your artist?
4. Are appropriate environmental and procedural precautions being instituted for the degree of tissue invasion?
5. If an implant, is the material safe for implant (with documentation) and is it well manufactured?

For informational exchange on risks please review www.bme.com/risks/index.html

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BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

We are pleased to announce the birth of Sevayka Gere. Born to Body Piercer Jessica Gere (nee Flood) of Virtue & Vice Body Piercing in Atlanta, GA and Rob Gere on November 6th, 2002. She weighed 8 lb. 6 oz at birth.

Congratulations to the proud parents!

While we are at it we should wish them well with their recent marriage as well!

Congratulations to the happy couple!

Hear a Pin Drop....

MY least favorite moment regarding offering piercing services in my studio was the day a man came in insisting that we pierce his 14 year old daughter's tongue. I explained that this was against the law, even IF she really WAS his daughter, because she was underage, and went into the usual schtick about aftercare being difficult for someone that young. He interrupted me, his voice getting louder and louder in the high volume of a Saturday afternoon when the shop was full of patrons, demanding that I do it because he wanted it DONE.

I admit I spoke before thinking, and in a loud clear voice answered him with, "There is no possible reason for a 14 year old girl to NEED a tongue piercing except POSSIBLY to give Daddy HEAD."

Let's just say you could have heard a pin drop as he and she turned and left the studio.

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A Bristly Experience

I am a piercer in Australia and I had a guy come in and he asked if he could buy some barbells. He wasn't quite sure what size he wanted and I said I would have to measure the sizes of the piercings, etc. I took him into the piercing room and he lifted his shirt. He had done his own navel and nipples with a pin and had really strange black plastic rods in his piercings. I asked what they were and he told me he had pulled the bristles out of a hairbrush (the ones with the knobby bits on them) and put them through his piercings to keep them open. He had done his genitals too, but I didn't even offer to see those! He kinda guessed the size barbells he needed for those. He asked if I could put the barbells in, but I declined, as you would! He went off with his barbells and my parting words were "be careful!" What else could I say....

A Stitch in Time?

Another man came in one day and saw one of the other piercers. He was looking for jewelry as well. He lifted his top and he had piercings going around his abdomen and hips, etc. I think his intentions were to loop some kind of chain around it, a la belt like. Unfortunately he used sewing pins and still had them in his piercings, ouch!

Dangerous Dreads

I had a young guy come in one day with his eyebrow piercing all mangled and he wanted me to check it out. It was obvious he had ripped it out and it was a fine mess. I asked if he had been in a fight, which always seems the case. But he said someone's dreadlocks got caught in the ring in a mosh pit and ripped it out. That one kinda made my eyes water. I suggested he let it heal and steer clear of mosh pits!

Good Reason to Use a Breathalyzer

I pierced a guy's eyebrow one day and I used a barbell. I turned around to get the ball to screw on the end and by the time I turned back it had puffed up like a basketball. The barbell had sunk up into the piercing and I couldn't see the end let alone screw the ball on! I was a bit confused and proceeded to ask the usual questions like "Are you on any medications? Do you bruise easily? Did you have a big night drinking?" and I explained how alcohol thins the blood, etc.

He replied, "I had about 8 beers before I came in." Needless to say I had to take the barbell out and explain why I had to do this. Usually I can smell and tell if someone is drinking, but this time I didn't even suspect it.

Do I Look Like a Dentist?

One day I had a guy come in who wanted his tongue pierced, so I got him to fill out a form and went to set up. When I came back to reception I was checking his form and I looked up and he was bleeding from the mouth. All I could say was, "Ohhhh, you're bleeding." He said he had just had a tooth pulled and thought while the anesthetic was still working he would get his tongue pierced. He got really shitt y



when I told him I wouldn't pierce his tongue and for the life of him couldn't understand why!

Sonya
 The Australian
 Inkpot Tattoo

and Piercing Studio-Australia

Car Accident Causes Un-piercing

One of Dublin's body Piercers was recently in a car crash, and came 'round in hospital to discover that the medical staff had sewn up the hole for a flesh tunnel (approximately 20 mm, I reckon) in her lower lip in the mistaken assumption that it was a wound received in the crash. To add insult to injury, when she insisted that they remove the stitches they refused, thinking that she was suffering from confusion induced by concussion....

Celestial Ring
 Stephen's Green Centre,
 Dublin 2, Ireland.
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 Fax: ++353-1-4784273
 e-mail: celestialring@goodebodies.ie

Unclear on the Concept

A customer came back in saying he was unhappy with the way a nipple piercing turned out that I had done on him. I asked what the problem was because when he showed it to me it looked perfectly placed and like it had been healing very well.

Then he thrusts his arm straight up in the air with his fist pointed at the ceiling and says, "Look! When I do this it goes crooked!"

I tried to explain to him that the body is dynamic and that when he moves in different positions, the ring will move with him accordingly. But he couldn't seem to understand the concept. He took the ring out and closed the piercing up, then came back to have me redo it.

Pat Roig,
 Rings of Desire, New Orleans

The Phuket Vegetarian Festival

by Paul King

I thought I would take a break from my usual discussions on history of a particular permanent piercing and instead give a little history on my favorite October festival...and no, it's not Halloween!



This amazing festival is most commonly known as "The Phuket Vegetarian Festival." The less common names are "The Festival of the Nine Chinese Emperor Gods" and its literal translation, "The Festival for Gaining Grace by Eating Food without Meat."

The festival is celebrated around the beginning of October, every year between the first and ninth day of the ninth month of the Chinese Lunar calendar. The island of Phuket¹ is most famous for viewing the festival but several nearby cities with Chinese communities also hold celebrations. The nine day festival climaxes with the most intense feats of body mortification ritual still in existence today. On the days of parade, hundreds of practitioners in trance, parade through the streets, with lances as long as 10 feet, pierced through holes in their cheeks as large as 1" (26mm). Some practitioners² splash themselves with boiling oil, hack at their backs with hatchets, slice their tongues with saw blades or flagellate themselves with a ball and chain covered in nails. This is endured while walking for miles barefoot from their home temples to the temple by the sea. The arduous

trek can take 4 hours or more.

The festival is said to have started at the Krathu (Kathu) sometime between 1820 and 1840. A drama troupe from China was hired to perform traditional operas to entertain the Chinese miners. While the troupe was in Phuket an epidemic was spreading and many people died. The performers also became ill. Fortunately, they realized

it was the ninth month and that they had not paid homage to the Nine Emperor Gods. They sent a man to the Fujian Province in China to bring back an urn containing large incense, which he kept lit on his journey from China, symbolically inviting the Gods to Phuket. The festival was started, the epidemic soon ended and the locals have been doing it ever since.³

According to the Master Narrative of the Vegetarian Festival, the festival is devoted to the Nine Emperor Gods, the sons, or manifestations, of the Goddess Doumu. Though Doumu is not directly involved in the festival and its ritual events, she is theologically the pivotal divinity of the festival; but since she does not play an easily perceptible role in it, visitors, devotees and even participants are often unaware of her importance. She is, however obliquely present in the festival though often misidentified as the popular deity, Kuan Yin.⁴

The Goddess Doumu helps heaven maintain the universe in equilibrium, provides for human sustenance, and judges all human deeds and misdeeds. She controls life and death, and bestows upon humans

rank and position, luck and fortune, prosperity and happiness, health and long life.⁵

The Nine Emperor Gods or "Kiu Ong", as a manifestation of Doumu's powers, are believed to have control over peoples' fate. As mediators of Doumu's power they are the principal deities of the Vegetarian Festival, which starts with their invitation ritual and arrival, and ends with their farewell ritual and departure.⁶ Although the Vegetarian Festival appears to have little significance in mainland China, the Nine Emperor Gods do appear in mainland mythology.⁷



Spirit Mediumship is an ancient technique of communication with the supernatural, in China as elsewhere. In Chinese folk religion a deity takes possession of the body replacing the medium's own Yang element of the soul.⁸ Mediumship is not a role one should aspire to. In fact mediums often claim that they were reluctant to accept the bargain, (this bargain usually dealing with extension of life, either because of a horoscope forecasting an early death or a serious sickness).⁹

...continued on page 11

Phuket Festival. ...continuation

Purification of space, of impure and dangerous forces, conceived generally as evil spirits, is one of the principal ritual activities of the spirit mediums.¹⁰ Self-purification, comprehended in a variety of ways is the primary declared purpose of the customs and precepts adhered to by the devotees during the festival.

The acts (of ritual piercing) are considered purification. It assures one's good fortune and to prevent misfortune in the coming year.¹¹ Some devotees believe that by torturing themselves the mediums take away the sins of the attending public.¹² Any mishaps such as excessive bleeding when pierced, suffering cuts on their soles when climbing bladed ladder or burns in fire walking are perceived as signs of personal impurity.¹³ Participants claim not to feel any pain. The absence of pain demonstrates to the evil forces the fierce power of the possessing deity, scaring them away.¹⁴

It is estimated by the late 1990's there were between 1500-1650 spirit mediums partaking in the Phuket Vegetarian Festival. The majority of participants serve as mediums for just a few years. There has been controversy within the local Chinese communities as well as anthropologists regarding the increasing of size, number and overall severity of the ritual acts.

Some consider it is the lowly spirits or deities, rather than the higher gods, who perform the most "gruesome" feats of self-mutilation.



Tourism is not generally thought to be the reason for the increase in numbers of mediums or intense feats. Some scholars believe it is the increasing shift of the disadvantaged members of society orienting to materialism. The irony is though there are many spectators viewing

the festival by far most of the island's tourists do not view any of the festival.

This festival is a unique glimpse into the past. Witnessing the feats, one can not help but be in awe of the power of both humans and the supernatural. Go....!

¹ "Phuket" is pronounced "pu" not "fu". The island is the largest in Thailand and is located off of the southwestern coast.

² also referred to as "Spirit Mediums"

³ The Chinese Vegetarian Festival in Phuket,(CVFP), Religion, Ethnicity and Tourism on a Southern Thai Island, by Erik Cohen, pub. White Lotus Press, 2001 page 51

⁴ CVFP, page 21

⁵ CVFP page 22

⁶ CVFP page 23

⁷ CVFP page 25

⁸ CVFP page 36

⁹ CVFP page 38 and 39

¹⁰ CVFP page 28

¹¹ CVFP page 113

¹² CVFP page 89

¹³ CVFP page 112

¹⁴ CVFP page 128

¹⁵ CVFP page 125





Camden Chameleon
1146 N. State Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 676-7330



How did you get started in this business?

In early 1994, I went into a shop for a navel piercing, and thought, "Gee, what's the big deal?" Maybe someone could bleed a little, or who knows...? So, a few weeks later I started asking around, and before I knew it, I was serving an apprenticeship. Little did I know, those people didn't have the knowledge or education I thought I was paying for.

Why did you choose this business over another type of business?

I liked the idea of working on humans as a canvas. The possibilities seemed endless, and I like the medical aspects, i.e.: the cleanliness, knowledge of the body, educating someone else about their body, etc. It seemed, at the time, to be growing from taboo, into something greater. And what a great way to help others through their passage, whatever that was for each person.

Would you care to highlight any aspects of your educational background?

Not that I ever thought it would be relevant in the world... But I did make it through college at the University of Wyoming, with an Art degree. Hmm. I think the education I've received since leaving the university is of far more importance than the piece of paper. Opening a business as blindly as I did in '97, and making it this far, has brought so much value, excitement, hardships, wonderment, education, etc., that could never be found in books in college!

What motivates you to succeed besides the desire to make money?

Every time I get down on owning the business, (mainly in slow times) I think about all the people who get horrible tattoos or piercings and need someone to help them, either by fixing it, and or by educating them on how to get it done right the next time. I think it's the obsessive or controlling side of me that just can't give up. Plus, it would give the other shops in the area more business, or our educated clients a longer distance to travel to a reliable shop. (Probably in Seattle.)

What successes in the past year are you most proud of accomplishing?

In March 2002, Camden Chameleon moved out of the railroad boxcar, into a very spacious building downtown. Thanks to the help of my past piercer, Tina, (who has since moved on) for running and taking care of the shop in the train car; Paul and I were able to tear down and build an amazing shop in a month and a half. We had the help of some very good friends, who sacrificed work days and sick days to help me create a dream shop and a space that I have not yet found an equal to.

What do you offer that the competition doesn't?

Our shop is the only one offering consistent aftercare, cleanliness, safety, knowledge, education, etc., in this town.

What do you think is the biggest obstacle in operating a successful business?

Not giving up when the guys down the street can offer false advertisement, externally threaded jewelry, bactine and ointment as after-care, silver nostril jewelry, an autoclave that sits up front, and a few bored tattoo guys to watch an under age girl get her nipples pierced for a few extra bucks and a favor to the piercer.

What have been the most important keys to your success?

Our educated customers and clients; as they create more of the same. Also, keeping consistency in quality and work and answers.

What is your company's greatest challenge?

Our greatest challenge is keeping qualified employees, who want to work. Finding people who aren't flakey, aren't on drugs, and are in good enough shape to show up to work day after day, consistently. If you know of any piercers who want a small town atmosphere, call me!!

How will you continue to succeed in this market?

By keeping up with changing standards of

health and educating ourselves and our clients and remembering that sometimes people will be mad at you for putting their safety first. Keeping our standards high and not compromising quality for quantity.

Do you have a hero or mentor, business or otherwise?

My hero or mentor would have to be Al D. Sowers. I wish he could see what we've built.

He's the one who raised my awareness and standards, as well as taught me a thing or two about piercing, business, and continually, about life. I'm glad that he's still helping people, with the scholarship program, as well as the education he armed so many with before his death. He is a great soul.

Do you face any particular business challenges due to the war and economic uncertainties our country now faces?

I think everyone does. This being a luxury/service industry. Plus having extra help around is tough in a state where unemployment is up, and the minimum wage is at \$7+ per hour; it's hard to get ahead.

What is your or your company's greatest asset?

Our clients that are armed with education, as they in turn educate others. Also having Paul Thomas on staff to keep my person skills in check. He has built so much of what this shop is today, and his style and skills complement mine and help me grow so much.

Anything else you would like to add?

Please come visit when you're in the area!

Product Review

Black Cat Tattoo Soap

We recently received samples of Black Cat Tattoo Soap. Although the packaging is tattoo-specific the company is also recommending this product for use to clean piercings below the neck, and for scarification.

Black Cat Tattoo Soap comes in a clear bottle and the contents are a somewhat alarming phosphorescent yellow/green coloration.

"We have had great results with navel and genital piercings healing in a few days," states the company representative. The company acknowledges that the Green Soap content of this product will bring its alcohol content to approximately 2%. Although they state the Green soap content is minimal, the product smells very strongly of the tincture. The product contains: Vitamin E Oil, water, Coconut Oil, Green Soap, and Potassium Hydroxide colorant. Their reported current expansion will result in at least 600 new locations selling this product.

We couldn't find anyone within our studios willing to use it on a healed or unhealed piercing, so we don't know how viable this product is as an aid to the healing process.

Bethra Szumski

Body Piercing and Accutane

by Elayne Angel

I received an email from a potential piercee who was interested in nipple piercings. He was taking Accutane (a common treatment for acne) and he believed there was a possibility he should wait an extended period of time after discontinuing the treatment before being pierced.

Here is a copy of his email:

Dear Elayne Angel,

I am sorry to bother you, but I am trying to find someone that may know the answer to my problem. I am currently on the prescription drug Accutane (Isotretinoin). I have been thinking about getting pierced for quite a long time and a week before I was about to go do it, I started my treatment with this drug. When I read the "Other Things to Consider" section of the drugs packaging it says "You should avoid skin treatments such as wax epilation and skin resurfacing (dermabrasion, laser) during therapy and for at least 6 months after your treatment ends."

Now I assumed this also included tattoos, but I couldn't figure out if it included body piercing. So in trying to find an answer I contacted Roche, the pharmaceutical company that manufactures the drug, and my doctor. Roche hasn't replied to any of my questions and my doctor actually admitted that he didn't know. I was wondering if you had any answers, and if you didn't I guess I will just wait another year to be safe.

I put the question to a Member of the APP Medical Committee, piercing-friendly Dermatologist Dr. Colene Calo from Michigan. Here is her informative reply:

I wouldn't recommend any piercings for 6 months following treatment with Accutane. It thins the epidermis all over the body...it isn't location specific.

Unfortunately, some patients have had untoward effects up to one year after Accutane, however these are usually after deeper tissue invasion such as CO2 facial resurfacing.

If the gentleman wants to be extra safe, I'd recommend waiting one year after Accutane. Otherwise, his wound may not heal as well as one would expect. If he pierces at 6 months, he'll need to find a piercing-friendly derm to take care of possible pyogenic granulomas, etc...that he may encounter.

Colene Calo, D.O.

Classified Ads

Employment Wanted

I am deeply committed to the industry, and I am searching for employment as a piercer in the Bowling Green or Findlay areas in Ohio.
 Jill Kinsey
 1-800-826-5832
 jezebeljk@netscape.net

I am a serious professional piercer seeking employment with an APP studio or studio wishing to move towards APP standards and membership. I have 4 and 1/2 years of professional piercing experience and all certifications are current, although I am not an APP member at this time. Ethics and integrity are very important to me. I am willing to relocate for the right situation. Resume, portfolio, and references can be provided upon request. If interested, please contact Colin Ray at (518) 393-1484. Please leave a detailed message and I will return all calls.

Employment Available

Piercer Wanted in Australia

I am searching for a qualified piercer who might like a 3 month contract at Cynergy Body Piercing in Noosa Junction, Australia, for January, February, and March, and maybe April. Accommodation is available for the right person for \$60 - \$80 a week presently, and no bond. The contract would include training one staff member. The hours are 10 am

till 4 pm at approximately \$16 an hour. If you might like a 3 month working holiday right on the beach and possess good communication skills, good technique and spot on hygiene, please contact Jacqui muffinmonsta@hotmail.com

Applications close mid December.

Piercer Wanted

We have immediate positions available for experienced tattoo artists and piercers in high volume studios in Austin and Magnolia, Texas. Fill out an on-line employment application at [/www.carnivalproductions.com/app](http://www.carnivalproductions.com/app) or contact us at 512.894.4442 or via email getajob@carnivore.net

Experienced Body Piercer Wanted

Pokey's Body Art
 Flexible Hours
 Must have portfolio
 References a must!
 Shop located on South Shore of Long Island
 Call (516) 221-1972 ask for Mike or JJ

Awesome Opportunity for Experienced Piercer!

New Piercing Studio open in Lilburn, GA. Looking for someone who likes the challenge of helping to mold a new studio! Great Pay & positive environment! Must possess positive attitude, team player, self-starter, with Good Customer Service Skills! (Prefer someone who can fulfill APP Standards)

Please call 678-478-7998 for more info.
 Email: limelitecorp@aol.com

COLD STEEL AMERICA is hiring!
 Cold Steel America is a fun and professional piercing and tattoo studio, with two locations in San Francisco, CA.

We are looking to hire a fully trained Body Piercer with a minimum of 3 years piercing experience in a studio. Please send a VHS video recording of yourself performing at least 2 piercings, starting from set up through clean up, including full aftercare, along with resume, portfolio and references. For the right person there is definite opportunity for advancement. Full time or part time / flexible hour positions are available. Sorry we are not hiring apprentices at this time.

Applicants must have an open and friendly demeanor with a desire to live in San Francisco. Individuals need to be professional, punctual, self-sufficient, responsible, comfortable with diverse communities and have great interpersonal communication. Applicants need to have the means and maturity to relocate to San Francisco. Please address questions to Tam Sherman at (415) 621-7233. If she is not in, please tell the Counterperson that the call is regarding possible employment. Mail resumes, references, portfolios and video to:
 Cold Steel America
 Attn: Tam
 2377 Market Street
 San Francisco, CA 94114

We Need You!

The APP needs your help to support our mission of disseminating of vital health, safety and education information to piercers, piercees, medical professionals and the general public. Your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law because we are a Non-profit corporation.

YOU choose where your dollars will be spent:

- AL D Scholarship Fund
- Legislation Outreach
- Educational Outreach
- Wherever it is most needed

YOU choose your Donation Level:

- Bamboo: \$20.00
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- Gold: \$100.00
- Platinum: \$250.00
- Other \$ _____

Bamboo Level receives an APP bumper sticker

Steel Level and up receive a full length video of the APP's 2001 Anthropology course featuring Jim Ward. This is NOT available for purchase anywhere, at any price!

Your name as you would like it to appear in the POINT as an APP supporter: _____

My check payable for \$ _____ to The Association of Professional Piercers is enclosed

Please charge my Visa or MasterCard:

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Send this form to:

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 PMB #286
 5456 Peachtree Industrial Blvd.
 Chamblee, GA 30341

We appreciate all contributions and thank you for your support!

The Worst Piercing Story

By Elayne Angel, Rings of Desire

I have been piercing professionally since the 1980's. In my experience, this is about the worst thing that has happened to someone I pierced. For better or worse, that "someone" was me! This is a complication I had never heard about before. If I had, then this might not have happened to me. So I will share this story with you even though it seems a little embarrassing....

On November 13, 1998 I pierced my own cheeks, directly in the fairly pronounced dimples I already had. I had thought about this piercing for many years, fantasizing about wearing diamonds in my dimples. I performed them on myself to mark a very important milestone that took place in my life on that date.

The placement was obvious; there wasn't really a lot of judgment call about where they should go. They belonged just right smack in the deepest part in the middle of each dimple (even though one is just slightly higher than the other). On the inside I carefully marked them to go at a comfortable angle, in a neutral spot where I thought they wouldn't interfere with my gums, nor get between my teeth. On inspection with palpation and using a strong flashlight, I didn't spot any vascularity or other anatomical structures of concern.

Being a left-handed piercer, I did the left cheek from the outside in, and the right one from the inside out. My dimples are pretty far back on my rather round cheeks and it was a bit of a challenge to do it, but I was very pleased with how they turned out. Afterwards, for about a week I had the interesting sensation of having been smiling too much, and that was about it for "discomfort."

I followed the standard care and had no bleeding, and normal swelling followed by entirely uneventful healing with no complications whatsoever. They took a while (about 6 or 7 months) to fully heal but didn't bother me in any way. I loved the way they looked, and I felt at least 33% cuter with my fancy dimples.

About a year and some months after they were done, they were thoroughly healed, then something very odd happened. The right side started to...well...leak. Yes, I had "leaky-cheeky" and I couldn't figure out what was going on. Every once in a while there was a drop of clear, odorless, tasteless liquid coming from the piercing, wetting my cheek. It was lighter than water and not at all viscous like saliva. I thought I possibly had an allergy and changed my soap and detergent. Then I thought I might have a jewelry fit problem and tried larger discs for the inside.

As time wore on, the leaking became worse and worse. It began to leak whenever I would eat or get excited. My cheek would get chapped from the liquid, and from wiping it away. This was getting to be more than annoying, but I was determined to fix the problem and keep the jewelry in there. No matter what.

I went to my Dentist for help. I saw an Oral/Facial Surgeon. The parotid glands and ducts were working fine with no obstruction into the oral cavity. That was the good news. The bad news was that AFTER healing, some portion of the parotid gland or duct seemed to have opened into the piercing channel. Their advice: (can you guess?) "Take those things out." No way. Over time, it got worse, and later, worse still. I had taken on a kind of "tic" of blotting my cheek against my shoulder. It became so bad that there would be a big wet spot the size of an orange on my shoulder. This was patently NOT okay! Not at all okay.

By then the left side had started to occasionally get a little damp on the outside, and I was really getting concerned.

The final straw was when I was about to do a piercing, and the liquid from my cheek almost dripped right on the client. That was it. That pushed it over the line to something I couldn't live with. So, I extremely reluctantly removed the jewelry to let the holes shrink/close up.

The leaking stopped in a few days but I was devastated to be without my fancy dimples. I figured out a little trick with Crazy Glue, some pointy tweezers, and small crystal rhinestones. I could carefully glue the little sparkly stones into place in my dimples where the jewelry used to go. Now when people ask, "Are those pierced?" I can respond, "Oh, no. Those are just glued in." And people think I'm joking with them (because I have plenty of other obvious piercings). So, it is a small amount of extra time and effort each day to glue the stones in, but I like the way it looks and saves me from having to tell this story all the time....

But the tale doesn't end there. A few weeks after I took the jewelry out, the right cheek started leaking again for no apparent reason. (The left one never leaked after I took the jewelry out.) The jewelry was gone, and I thought that was going to be the end of that nightmare. So, then I started to use my good friend, Crazy Glue (gel, for this usage) to glue the hole shut. I would add the stone on after the hole was sealed up with glue. What a pain! Over the ensuing months the right cheek leaked off and on. I decided to try something a little drastic: I had a friend use a cautery scalpel to burn the hole to generate some scar tissue to seal off the opening. (Not a service offered at Rings of Desire!) That worked for a few weeks, then the leaking started again. As I write this, my cheek is now healing from the third cautery burn, and I have a pretty good feeling that this time we hit it deep enough to really seal it off for good. I hope. I hope.

So, when people come into my shop requesting cheek piercing, I share my story with them. Nobody has ever tried to "talk me into it" after that, I assure you. If the requested placement would be in the folds right around the mouth, that would be fine. I wouldn't consider piercing in any placement beyond the molars.

If you have any related stories, please let me know.

New Brochure Available on ORAL PIERCING

SUGGESTIONS FOR SAFETY AND MINIMIZING RISKS

By Elayne Angel

In recent times there has been a variety of derogatory press about oral piercings including from the ADA. In their defense, perhaps some of the negativity may result from the fact that many medical and dental professionals tend to come into contact only with the piercings that do end up troubled. That said, most of what is reported does not tell the whole story, and some of it is pure fiction.

There is no doubt that when exaggerated tales of heinous complications are announced by the media it impacts our business. It is up to us to educate and inform people that risks from oral piercings can be very small, and that literally thousands heal with no trouble at all. Many people wear oral piercings for years without any damage whatsoever.

Following is the text of our newest APP informational brochure. It came about as a result of the inaccurate, uninformative, negative brochure being distributed by Patterson Dental Supply that was reprinted (with permission) in POINT 22. We determined that the best use of our time and energy would be to publish and widely distribute a pamphlet that provides interested parties with more up-to-date, thorough information. We suggest that every piercer and piercee bring a copy to their dentist and oral hygienist and that piercers carry them in the studio to help disseminate this important information. The brochure may be reprinted in its entirety, recopied and distributed at will. Also, it is available as a tri-fold pamphlet on glossy paper for \$12.95 per hundred from our APP office. They will also appear on the new and improved website once the updates are complete.

Oral Piercing Risks and Safety Measures

A well-informed and discerning consumer is subject to far fewer dangers than one with incomplete or inaccurate information.

When properly performed, the piercing procedure itself takes only a few seconds, and involves minimal discomfort and often no blood. Healing is ordinarily rapid and is commonly uneventful.

Most of the concerns about oral piercings center on one of three areas:

- *Fear of an unsafe procedure
- *Potential for damage to teeth and oral structures
- *Risk of infection

These potential hazards are generally easily controlled when the following steps are taken.

Piercer

To reduce risks of an unsafe procedure, you must first select the right piercer, one who:

- *Has appropriate training; is skilled, experienced, clean and professional;
- *Practices safe piercing technique and cross-contamination control;
- *Works in a hygienic environment that conforms to relevant local and/or state regulations;
- *Follows OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens standards;
- *Has obtained all applicable licenses and permits;
- *Spore tests autoclave (sterilizer) regularly and can provide documentation;
- *Uses appropriate sterile instruments and jewelry, and sterile disposable needles;
- *Takes the time to verbally instruct in proper care guidelines and provides written instructions;
- *Is available for follow-up and questions post-piercing, so any developing problems can be resolved before damage occurs.

See the APP's PICKING YOUR PIERCER brochure for additional details and information.

Jewelry

The potential for structural damage from tongue and oral piercing can be dramatically reduced by wearing appropriate jewelry. Complications may result if the jewelry is inappropriately sized, improperly placed, or poorly manufactured.

Things to consider:

- *Correct style of jewelry for the particular anatomy and piercing placement;
- *Jewelry accurately sized to the area - The initial, longer jewelry that allows for usual swelling should be replaced with a shorter piece after swelling has dissipated, as this has less chance of negatively impacting the teeth and other oral structures.
- *Surgical implant grade jewelry -See the accepted APP Minimum Jewelry Standards for detailed jewelry material and design specifications.
- *Balls made of acrylic can be worn on tongue barbells to further minimize the risk of damage to the teeth.
- *Check that threaded ends are on securely. Tighten them each day to insure jewelry stays in place.
- *A smaller ball can be worn on the underside of the tongue to reduce contact with the sublingual portion of the oral cavity.
- *Piercees should be strongly cautioned that playing with the jewelry excessively is frequently the cause of reported tooth and gum damage and should be avoided.

Placement

Proper placement is absolutely critical to the health and comfort of the piercee.

Traditional placement for a tongue piercing:

- *Along the midline of the tongue, essentially in the center of the mouth;
- *Often approximately 3/4" or so back from the tip of the tongue;
- *Commonly placed with the top a little further back than the bottom (This allows the top of the jewelry to lean slightly back, away from the teeth, and towards the higher part of the upper palate where there is more room in the mouth);
- *Usually placed just in front of the attachment of the lingual frenulum (web under the tongue).

Traditional placement for lip or cheek piercings:

*Should be placed relatively perpendicular to the area to avoid having the jewelry rest at a sharp angle.

*Position should be chosen so that the jewelry rests in a neutral spot within the mouth.

*Post should be shortened to fit snugly once healing is done to minimize contact of jewelry with the gums or teeth.

*Place cheek piercing no further away from the mouth than the first molars to avoid parotid gland and ducts.

*A strong light can be used to check the selected placement for vascularity and enervation (blood vessels and nerves).

Aftercare

The risk of exposure to infection can be controlled during the piercing procedure by the use of sterile tools, jewelry and needle, and a thorough understanding and implementation of aseptic technique. Entirely vital for avoiding infection during healing is the cooperation of the piercee in caring for the piercing properly.

*The piercer must thoroughly explain aftercare protocol, including providing written and verbal guidelines detailing the use of antimicrobial alcohol-free mouth rinses and sea salt rinses.

*Don't share plates, eating utensils, cups, and such.

*Replace your toothbrush and make sure to keep it extra clean during healing.

*Keep dirty fingers, pencils, sunglasses, and other foreign objects away from the mouth and face.

*Avoid excessive talking, playing with the jewelry, and all oral sexual contact during healing.

See the APP AFTERCARE GUIDELINES FOR ORAL PIERCINGS brochure for detailed care information.

What About Swelling?

Most piercees report little or no bleeding and a minimum of swelling for a few days when the piercing is performed properly and approved care guidelines are followed.

*Gently sucking on chipped or shaved ice can diminish swelling during initial healing

*Elevation of the head above the heart while sleeping (use several pillows) may minimize initial overnight swelling

*The use of over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen taken according to package instructions may limit the extent of initial swelling

Isn't the Mouth Dirty?

Although often cited, this concern may not be as valid as expected. The extremely short healing time of the average oral piercing provides a much smaller window of opportunity for exposure to external infection than do many other common piercings. For instance, a tongue piercing usually heals in 4 – 6 weeks, compared to 6 – 9 months or longer for a navel piercing.

As the main 'entry portal' for any material entering the body, the oral cavity is exposed to a variety of toxins, bacteria, and other noxious substances on a near-constant basis. Drinking or eating anything contaminated with disease-causing microbes can potentially cause illness and infection. Breathing air that contains airborne pathogens may lead to other types of systemic disease. Why then are we relatively healthy despite this continual microbial assault? The answer lies in the design of the oral cavity and its defensive strategies.

Saliva contains numerous antimicrobial factors that directly attack and deactivate harmful microbes. Among them:

* Lysozyme

* Lactoferrin

* Salivary peroxidase

* Myeloperoxidase

* Agglutinins

* Immunoglobulins ('antibodies')

Because saliva is produced only within the oral cavity, the mouth is at a distinct advantage over other parts of the body when it comes to warding off infection. Oral mucosa has an extremely high 'turnover rate' which makes it one of the fastest healing sites in the body. This fast turnover rate allows oral mucosa to maintain its structural integrity by a system of continuous cell renewal in which cells are produced by cell division, migrate to the surface of the tissue, and replace those cells which are shed. Cellular turnover rates for oral mucosa of the cheek is 25 days compared to 52-75 days for skin.

Because the head and neck region houses a highly concentrated system of veins, arteries and lymph vessels allowing for rapid transportation of these anti-infective agents, infectious agents can be attacked and dealt with in a swift manner.

When a piercing in the oral cavity is performed, infection rates are negligible when sterile equipment, proper aseptic protocol and appropriate jewelry selection are combined with conscientious aftercare. This requires the education of

both the piercer and the client, and with cooperation can ensure a safe and successful experience.

Information is the Key

Unsafe, unethical, and uneducated piercers thrive in areas where complete, accurate information is not made available to both the general public and those who seek to protect them. Making oral piercings illegal forces consumers who still seek them to patronize unregulated, underground establishments. Only by supporting the dissemination of accurate information and the efforts of conscientious professionals can the risks of piercing truly be controlled.

To disparage the efforts of a burgeoning profession without full and appropriate information is not an accurate or helpful response. Since many individuals still desire oral piercings and intend to get them, it is far more constructive to provide accurate information and specific guidelines on safe piercing procedure and how to choose a practitioner.

The APP is a non-profit organization dedicated to health, education and safety of piercers and the public. We are a group of committed professionals who uphold an extremely high standard of safety and hygiene. We support the development of appropriate regulations and standards to ensure the improvement of our art form and the continued safety of our clientele.

For more information please contact the Association of Professional Piercers (APP)

www.safepiercing.org

1 (888) 888-1APP

Association of Professional Piercers
PMB #286

5456 Peachtree Industrial Blvd.
Chamblee, GA 30341

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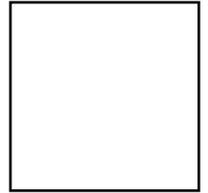
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The APP wishes you
a Joyful Holiday Season
and a Happy New Year.

