

NEWS RELEASE

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BODY PIERCING

On March 20, 2001 the Niagara County Legislature passed local law #1-2001 which prohibited the body piercing of minors in Niagara County without the written informed consent of one parent or legal guardian. As a result the Niagara County Board of Health promulgated rules and regulations on April 26, 2001 implementing this law. These rules and regulations deal with acceptable proof of age, record keeping, record storage and availability, penalties for non-compliance and after care instructions. The Niagara County Department of Health is the enforcement agent for this Law and will determine compliance with the regulations on a complaint basis.

The Legislature and Board of Health concerns with body piercing center around the potential health risks associated with same. Any time the skin is pierced there is a potential for infection. Hepatitis B, C, or HIV or other infections are possible. There is no cure for Hepatitis C and a preventative vaccine is available for Hepatitis B and it is recommended that immunization occur prior to getting a piercing. Additional risks of body piercing include dental damage for mouth piercings along with enamel erosion and other dental concerns. Allergic reactions to chemicals or certain jewelry used are also a potential.

If you are considering body piercing the following is offered as information for consideration:

- Take time to find a professional artist.
- Studio must be clean, sanitary and well lit.
- Make sure jewelry being used is made for piercing and specifically designed for the part being pierced.
- There should be a sink and soap for hand washing.
- The piercer should wear and immediately put on disposable gloves before beginning a piercing.
- Piercing guns should only be used on earlobes.
- Sterile surgical, single use piercing needles must be used for body piercing.
- Equipment used for piercing must be cleaned and sterilized.
- Before piercing the site must be cleaned and wiped with antiseptic.
- If you are considering getting pregnant within the next year or you are breastfeeding do not get a piercing.
- If the person who pierces cannot or will not answer your questions, leave and find a different artist.

Aftercare for a piercing involves the following:

- Make sure you leave with written instructions on how to care for your piercing.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching or cleaning pierced area.
- Do not play with your jewelry as it can cause infection.
- Any infection needs to be treated promptly.
- See a health professional if piercing is not healing or becomes infected.
- Avoid sexual contact until the area is well healed for genital piercing.
- A nipple piercing will not affect a woman's ability to breastfeed.

Niagara County does not have any infection control standards or licensing or permitting requirements for body piercers. Individuals must exercise their own judgment based upon information they have obtained prior to actually getting a piercing. It is noted that Ontario does have infection control standards for body piercers and their Public Health Department inspects their facilities on an annual basis.

Questions on this issue can be directed to the Niagara County Department of Health Nursing or Environmental Divisions at 439-7470 and 439-7444 respectively.