

TOOLS

- Ring Expanding Pliers/Ring Opening Pliers– Can be used to spread a captive ring open enough to get the bead in or out. Place the head of the pliers inside of the ring and slowly squeeze on the handle to spread the jaws open, widening the ring just enough to pull the ball out
- Ring Closing Pliers– Can be used to close the gap on a captive ring that was opened too wide by Ring Expanding Pliers, or if you are inserting a bead that is smaller than the one that was previously in the ring

RETAINERS

Most piercers offer a selection of retainers:

- Some are specific to a particular type of piercing, while others can be used in a variety of placements
- Retainers can be worn to conceal piercings
- Retainers can be worn to keep piercings open when metal jewelry must be removed, such as for sports or medical care

MEDICAL OR DENTAL PROCEDURES

Many health-care workers insist that you remove body jewelry for all procedures or tests, especially when the area in question is adjacent to a piercing. If you think it may be difficult to put jewelry back in once it is removed, take precautions to preserve your piercing:

- Discuss your piercing with your doctor or dentist prior to scheduling an appointment in which the presence of your jewelry may be an issue
- Your piercer may be able to supply recommendations for practitioners who are knowledgeable about piercing, or help you to educate your own—and perhaps your jewelry can stay
- Inquire about whether you will be permitted to wear a non-metallic replacement when you must remove metal from your body
- Obtain a retainer before your appointment and arrange for an insertion if you will need help
- If you cannot get a retainer in advance, a sterile floss threader (available in a dental office) or sterile tubing from a catheter needle (available in a hospital) can function as a retainer

JEWELRY REINSERTION AFTER REMOVAL

If the hole is still open and hasn't shrunk too much, a piercer can use a tool called an insertion taper to insert jewelry in the channel without repiercing. Initially, you may need to wear a smaller jewelry gauge if the hole is too tight to immediately put back in your prior size.

JEWELRY EMERGENCIES

Mishaps occur on occasion, even with quality pieces. To minimize the likelihood of losing your jewelry, check threaded ends regularly for tightness, and see to it that captive beads are inserted properly. If you lose a ball, a temporary measure may prevent your jewelry from falling out until you can obtain a replacement:

- Eraser– Use a small piece of clean pencil eraser and cut it to the desired size and shape. Press it onto the end of a barbell post or between the ends of your empty captive ring to keep jewelry in place
- Band-Aid or surgical tape– Apply it to your jewelry and/or body in a way that keeps the piece from falling out

*For oral piercings such as tongue and lip, initial jewelry must be downsized once swelling is gone. See the APP brochure: *Oral Piercing Risks and Safety Measures* for more information.

Photos courtesy of Paul King, www.coldsteelpiercing.com; Neometal, www.neometal.com; and Industrial Strength Body Jewelry, www.isbodyjewelry.com. Text from *The Piercing Bible* by Elayne Angel, www.piercingbible.com

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Disclaimer: These guidelines are based on a combination of vast professional experience, common sense, research, and extensive clinical practice. These suggestions are not to be considered a substitute for medical advice from a doctor.

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JEWELRY FOR HEALED PIERCINGS



If you like the body jewelry you're wearing, it fits properly*, and is of high quality, then it can be worn indefinitely. But the form and function of initial body jewelry are all about safety, so your choices are limited. After your piercing has healed, you have countless options and it should be safe to replace your jewelry when all of the following conditions are met:

- It is not tender
- The minimum initial healing time has passed
- Your piercing is no longer secreting and getting crusty

The size, material, quality, and style (along with the weight and finish) contribute to whether a piece of jewelry is suited for daily wear in the body. Some are acceptable for only a few hours of dress-up fun.

JEWELRY INSERTIONS

It is customary for a piercer to put new jewelry in for free or to charge a small fee when you make a purchase. They can help you to select the right size and type of jewelry for your anatomy, and they have a sanitary environment with access to appropriate tools if needed.

If putting in new jewelry at home:

- Make sure the piercing site, your hands, the jewelry, and your work area are clean
- Soak your piercing and/or lubricate the jewelry to facilitate removal and insertion, because piercings are often tight
- Never try to force or push your jewelry in; this can tear your tissue
- If jewelry doesn't go in easily, visit a piercer for assistance

Quickly replace any jewelry that causes irritation, itching, swelling, or redness, no matter how much you like the way it looks.

ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

In addition to the materials commonly used for fresh body piercings, healed piercings may tolerate (or even thrive with) jewelry crafted of alternative materials including horn, bone, wood, amber, stone, and others created by Mother Nature. Sometimes referred to as "natural" or "organic" jewelry, these materials have been worn in piercings throughout the ages and all around the globe.

Additionally, there are man-made options such as certain types of plastic (including acrylic and silicone) and glass. Like all body jewelry, these products vary in quality and wearability.

Choose your jewelry to suit your lifestyle as well as your budget and aesthetic preferences:

- Many alternative materials are fragile compared to metal, so jewelry with pointy or narrow areas or in thin gauges may be easily broken

- They may not be safe to wear during sports or sleep, and should be removed for bathing and swimming
- Adornments that are extremely heavy will seldom be appropriate for everyday wear
- Etched, twisted, or matte finish items have the potential to cause irritation
- Cracks, pits, and uneven surfaces are not uncommon in natural materials, and they may encourage the growth of microbes, so keep an eye on the health of your piercing

JEWELRY REMOVAL

Even momentary removal of the jewelry from a healed piercing may result in rapid shrinkage of the piercing, and make reinsertion difficult or impossible. Most holes shrink fairly rapidly and can continue to do so over time. Over the ensuing weeks, the area will stabilize and the channel is apt to remain in whatever state it has achieved within a month or two—smaller, or fully closed.

Carefully consider whether you are truly done with a piercing before leaving the hole empty. Reinserting jewelry in a piercing that has shrunk can be more painful than the original stick—but if a hole is still present and can be stretched, then repiercing is not usually appropriate. If the initial placement was correct, relocating the piercing is undesirable.

If you end up with a piercing complication, it is **not** better to take out your jewelry now and try to get it reinserted or repierced later. Scar tissue, delayed healing, and other issues can occur from repiercing after unnecessarily abandoning a piercing.

THERE ARE SEVERAL PRIMARY STYLES OF BODY JEWELRY AND MANY VARIATIONS ON THOSE STYLES. FOR REMOVAL PURPOSES THEY ARE:

TYPE 1: Rings that are held together by tension and require bending and/or the removal of a dimpled ball or other captive piece

FIXED BEAD RING

(also continuous or seamless ring)

On a fixed bead ring, the bead is attached to one side of the ring. Grasp the ring on each side of the bead, pull gently and one end will pop out of the bead. Push one end away from you and pull the other end toward you to open the ring like a spiral. The beadless variation also opens by twisting.



CAPTIVE JEWELRY

(also segment ring, captive tube, and other captive ornaments)

The bead or captive piece of a captive ring is held in by the tension of the ring. Grasp the ring with one hand near the bead, and with the other hand grasp the bead itself. Gently pull the ring and bead in opposite directions and the bead should pop out of the ring. To remove it, twist the ring a little (as in opening a bead ring) and rotate the jewelry to slide it out of the piercing.



Note: Pliers may be needed to open and/or close captive jewelry depending on material, diameter, gauge, and jewelry quality. (See "Tools" on reverse side.)

TYPE 2: Pieces that have threaded ends that must be unscrewed

THREADED JEWELRY

(straight, curved, and circular barbell; J-curve, labret stud, screw-on-ball ring, flesh tunnel, and surface bar)

Barbells and their variations have threaded ends that can be unscrewed. Like most threaded objects, they tighten to the right and loosen to the left.



TYPE 3: Pieces that press together and pull apart

PRESS-FIT JEWELRY

(commonly threadless barbells and curved bars)

The pieces simply pull apart. If you are trying to remove jewelry that will not unscrew counter-clockwise as expected, you may be dealing with a press-fit piece.



TYPE 4: Pieces that are free-standing, held in by gravity, other jewelry, or with an O-ring; they simply slide out or come off

FREE STANDING

(single [or non-] flare plug/eyelet, nipple shield, shaped ear ornament, eyebrow retainer)

These pieces are easily removed by simply sliding them out. Remove O-ring or additional jewelry as needed. If the piece doesn't move easily, a little bit of lubricant may be helpful.



TYPE 5: Pieces that stay in because of their shape and (may) require some pressure to remove

HELD IN BY SHAPE

(nostril screw, septum retainer, double-flare plug/eyelet, notched septum piece, shaped ear ornament)

These pieces are held in by virtue of their shape. Over time they may become loose. Some may require the assistance of a piercer for removal.



HELD IN BY SHAPE

(surface anchors)

Surface anchors have become very popular. The tiny L-shaped jewelry base that is inserted into the tissue remains in place, though generally the ornament is threaded and can be changed.

