Consumer’s Bill of Rights

All consumers receiving services offered by Oregon professionals licensed, certified or registered by the Health Licensing Office have a legal right to:

- Receive competent professional services
- Verify the names, titles and credentials of professionals providing services
- Receive clear explanations of the services offered and cost for the services
- Refuse any services offered
- Receive information on complaints that have resulted in final action
- File a complaint with the Health Licensing Office regarding a practitioner, facility, or an unlicensed/uncertified person practicing
- Request reasonable accommodations to access professional services as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Be treated with courtesy and respect
- Have service options and consequences explained

Want to get a body piercing in Oregon? Here’s a few things you should know

Body piercings and tattoos are very popular, and have been throughout history. Some estimates say one-third of the United States population have either a body piercing or tattoo. The choice to express your individuality is a personal one, but make sure that decision is made knowing some of the health risks involved, and the responsibility you have for caring for your body following a piercing or tattoo.

Body piercings and tattoos are applied with a needle inserted into or through the skin. Unsterile piercing and tattoo equipment and needles, or unsanitary procedures performed in an unclean setting can spread serious infections such as Hepatitis B or C virus, tetanus, or possibly even HIV. Regulation of body piercing and tattoo facilities vary from state to state. In Oregon, technicians or facilities which provide body piercing or tattoo services must be state-licensed and inspected annually.

Complications from body piercings relate to the body area pierced. Earlobes and the ear cartilage are the most frequently pierced sites. Ear cartilage piercings do not heal as quickly as lobe piercings because of the different type of tissue involved and pressure on the piercing area during sleep. Other commonly pierced body parts include eyebrows, lips, nose, tongue, nipple, navel, and genital sites. A hollow needle is passed through the body part followed by the insertion of the body jewelry in the hole. A small amount of bleeding may occur as a result of the piercing. A piercing gun must never be used on any body area other than the earlobe because the gun crushes the tissues that are pierced. Tongue piercings initially swell a large amount but heal quickly because of bloodflow through the tongue. However, many dentists report that tongue piercings increase the risk of bacterial infection in the mouth and damage teeth. An improperly performed tongue piercing could also result in serious medical problems. Navel piercings can become infected easily because tight-fitting clothes do not allow enough air to circulate and allow moisture to collect around the piercing site. Healing problems may also occur if the jewelry used is not the correct jewelry for the pierced area.

Sometimes people obtain body piercings from friends or self-inflict a piercing. These are made in unclean conditions using objects such as pencils, pens, straight pins, or needles. NEVER perform a piercing, or have your body pierced, in an unlicensed amateur setting. Professionals use clean equipment and jewelry sterilized in an autoclave. Such precautions are the only means to prevent the transmission of potentially deadly bacteria.

Complete information about the state regulations for body piercing in Oregon are available on the Health Licensing Office website, www.hlo.state.or.us
# Aftercare: Keeping it clean

A majority of infections investigated by health departments and physicians surrounding body piercings occurred after the person leaves a piercing or tattoo shop. Taking care of the affected skin area in the days and weeks following the procedure is vital.

- Clean the pierced area with a saline solution twice a day. Gently wash the area surrounding and including the piercing. Remove all crusty formations from the pierced area and jewelry. Rinse off the soap, making sure that all crust formations are gone from the soap. Liquid soaps are ideal to prevent cross contamination. Salt water soaks are good to loosen up crusty formations on skin. You can make a salt water soak by adding 1/4 teaspoon of salt to eight ounces of warm water.

- Wash your hands with soap before touching or cleaning the pierced area during the healing process. Don’t let anyone else touch the pierced area during the healing period. Avoid contact with body fluids of other people. Even your own sweat may irritate the piercing. Be sure to rinse the area after all exercise to remove sweat. If the piercing is an ear piercing, clean your telephone and sunglasses with disinfectant spray or alcohol. Wash the part of glasses that touches your ear with soap and water.

- Check any threaded jewelry in your mouth twice a day to make sure the ends are tight. You may swallow the barbell or damage a tooth if it comes loose. Avoid all oral contact with other people during the healing process for a tongue piercing.

- Avoid tight clothes, remember good air circulation is important for healing. For navel piercing, don’t wear large belts that constrict and avoid sleeping on your stomach.

- Avoid swimming, especially in public pools and hot tubs until the pierced area has healed.

- For mouth care following tongue (or lip piercing) choose an antibacterial mouthwash that does not contain alcohol, and rinse your mouth after all meals and snacks. If you notice bad breath and an odd-colored tongue, the mouth wash may have killed off the mouth’s own natural healthy bacteria. If this happens, switch to salt water rinses (see above) instead of mouthwash.

## Healing times for body piercings vary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piercing</th>
<th>Healing Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ear lobe</td>
<td>6 to 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear cartilage</td>
<td>4 months to 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyebrow</td>
<td>6 to 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostril</td>
<td>2 to 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal septum</td>
<td>6 to 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal bridge</td>
<td>8 to 10 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongue</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lip</td>
<td>2 to 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nipple</td>
<td>3 to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navel</td>
<td>4 months to 1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Thinking about getting a piercing or tattoo?

**Talk to your friends or others who have been pierced or tattooed.** Ask them about their experiences, the cost, pain involved and healing time. Ask them what they would do if they had a chance to do it again.

**Make the decision to get pierced a sober one.** Do not get a piercing or tattoo while under the influence or alcohol or drugs. Your body will react physiologically different while under the influence, and you might not like the choice you made the next morning. Make sure the technician performing the procedure is not chemically impaired either.

**Getting a piercing or tattoo needs to be a personal decision.** You have the ultimate say over your appearance, and what you do to your body. Understand that you do not have to pierce or tattoo your body to belong, or fit in, even if a friend tells you otherwise.

**Have a licensed professional perform the piercing or tattooing.** Professionals have industry standards and state regulations to uphold. They must provide a safe and hygienic setting to perform the procedure. A professional will be happy to show you their license issued by the Oregon Health Licensing Office. Never pierce or tattoo your own body or let a friend do it because of potential infection complications.

**The work area should be clean and follow national guidelines to prevent blood contamination.** The technician should wear protective gloves and single-use needles should be packaged in sterile containers - make sure you see the technician open a sterile container and load the needle prior to performing a procedure. Piercing guns may only be used on earlobes. Make sure the technician changed disposable gloves between the previous client and your appointment. Discuss infection control and sanitation beforehand - if the technician refuses to talk about safety issues with you, take your business elsewhere.

**Take care of the affected skin area after the procedure.** The piercing or tattoo technician must supply you with a safety guideline sheet about how to keep the pierced area clean and free of infection. Healing times for a piercing can vary anywhere from six weeks for an earlobe piercing up to one year for complex body piercing procedures. If a pierced area hurts, swells or drains fluid for an unusual amount of time, consult a doctor right away.

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The Wants and Needles Campaign is a public education service of the State of Oregon, Health Licensing Office. More information is available on the Web at [www.hlo.state.or.us](http://www.hlo.state.or.us)