

Piercer Periodical

May, 2021. v1.1

Piercing Guns: Blunt force piercing



This month's deep dive.

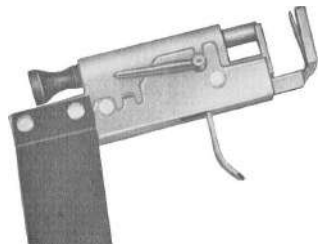
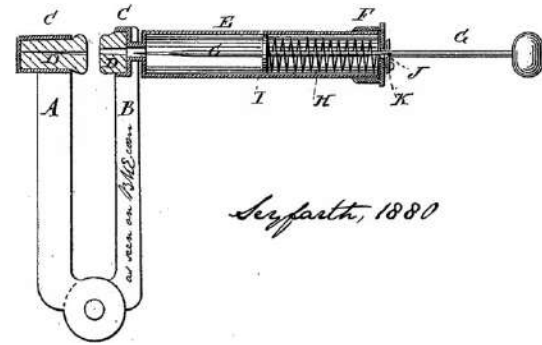
MSCEP (mechanical stud and clasp ear piercing devices) and their history of use in body art, changes in regulations, fundamental flaws and how to help clients overcome issues.

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A brief history of piercing guns

An ear piercing instrument is a device designed to pierce earlobes by driving a pointed starter earring through the lobe. These instruments are commonly referred to as a piercing gun or an ear piercing gun, which are typically used in mall shops and may be reusable or disposable, depending on the design. For many reasons, they have been widely criticised by professional body piercers around the world.

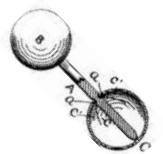


We should be referring to all non-needle piercing apparatus as “mechanical stud and clasp ear piercing devices” (MSCEP) as that is the industry-recognized term and its origins date back to the 1880’s¹ when the first automatic piercing instrument was patented.

Contrary to popular belief they were not based on a cattle tagging design, however, designed specifically to aid in ear piercings. Unlike their modern counterpart, they generally used a hollow needle² to penetrate the skin and the jewellery (usually a ring) had to be manually inserted after.

In the early 1950s, HRH Princess Elizabeth (the future HM Queen Elizabeth II) had her ears pierced which began a significant increase in the general interest in ear piercing and developed a fashion trend in women. This fandom didn’t last long as interest dropped towards the late 1950s, and didn’t see a resurgence until the late 1960s and early 1970s. Bless those hippies. Various manufacturers began making different modernised models, which generally had a palm-grip design and began to resemble a pistol, hence the term of a “piercing gun”.³

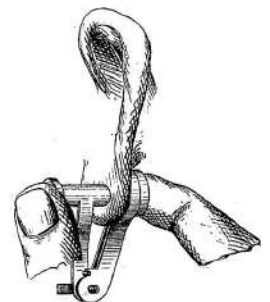
Although the “butterfly back” we know today wasn’t standard, there were many different designs being used - including one that resembles modern-day body jewellery⁴.



Concerns of cross-contamination became significantly more mainstream as did apprehension that alcohol swabs were not sufficient to clean the instrument, a more revised system was developed like the Studex Plus and Caflon Blu which used disposable components that touched the ear⁵.

The “handclasp” model became popular in the 1970s and was adopted by medical professionals over the gun, due to its single-use design and advertising, however it still used identical jewellery to the reusable counterpart.

Although becoming heavily restricted, even banned entirely, in some places of the world the modern piercing gun continues to be the standardised method for many parents who want their children’s ears pierced.



¹ <https://patents.google.com/patent/US230073>

² <https://patents.google.com/patent/GB765220A/en>

³ https://celebrity.fandom.com/wiki/Ear_piercing_instrument

⁴ <https://patents.google.com/patent/US320991>

⁵ <https://vintageearpiercing.wordpress.com/>

Types of piercing guns

Traditional model

The piercing gun stores potential energy when the spring mechanism is pulled back and the mechanism is released when the trigger is engaged.

They allow for a semi-automated installation where both components are slid into the gun from paired sealed sterile containers but are not able to be sterilised, due to mechanical moving parts and its plastic construction.

The ear lobe is inserted in between the loaded front and back, and the pointed end of the jewellery is pushed through the earlobe with enough pressure to penetrate the soft tissue and into the friction set backing.



Disposable cartridge model

More updated piercing guns use a fully disposable sterile cartridge, referred to as a cassette, which holds the stud and clasp backing.

Although these cassettes can be used on their own using the force of the operator's index finger and thumb, they are more commonly used with a palm-triggered metal mechanism that the cassette is loaded into.



Nose piercing model

An alteration of the gun cassette, with the removal of the clasp backing and the addition of a spiked penetrating end to stop the jewellery from falling out after insertion.



Handclasp model

With this design, the operator must manually squeeze the handgrip and force the stud through the tissue of the ear using their thumb.

These models are commonly sold online as a “Do it yourself” tool.

Generally these are sold sterile and pre-loaded with jewellery and some models work with studs in capsules which are loaded without requiring being touched.



Poor jewellery design

By design, modern piercing guns don't technically pierce the skin. Instead, they use the jewellery itself to penetrate the skin via force, wedging the jewelry between irritated and now-inflamed skin.

Although the adoption of single-use piercing models and sterile cassettes for guns has reduced the risk of cross-contamination during a procedure, the fundamental flaws of the jewellery design remain unchanged.

Reputable manufacturers have begun making similar styled legacy designs, but to industry standard specifications, it should be noted they are NOT designed for initial piercing procedures.

1. Pointed back

The penetrating part of the jewellery is permanently on the back of the jewellery. The sharpness can vary between manufacturers and sharper is less traumatic for the initial piercing wound, however increases the chance of accidental injury to the neck later.

2. Poor polish finish

Gun jewellery is generally machine or tumble finished, resulting in a less than desirable surface finish. A rough surface will have microscopic valleys, pits, pores, and crevasses to collect and harbor potentially dangerous bacteria.

3. Non-verified metals

Professional grade body jewellery is made from verified implant grade materials, such as ASTM F-136 Titanium or ASTM F-138 Steel with mill certificates readily available to prove biocompatibility.

4. Step-down edges

Locking mechanisms require a step down in the shaft to lock, this drop and rise in thickness results in further irritation to the piercing as it drags through the new wound, causing even more trauma to the tissue.

5. Fixed Wearing Length

People's anatomy will differ in thicknesses and swelling, requiring different lengths – however, gun ear piercing studs are one length. Compressed or restricted tissue can lead to prolonged and complicated healing and sometimes, embedded jewellery.

6. Clasp mechanism buildup

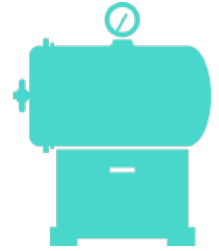
The "butterfly back" design of studs trap bodily fluids and cellular discharge, and creates a sticky mass behind the piercing. Bacteria build up and can get trapped around the hole, increasing the chance of infection. The design also means that installation and removal will inherently scratch the rear of the stud which can increase damage during consequential removal.



Inability to be sterilised

“Before and after each piercing, thoroughly cleanse the entire area of the clasp retainer by wiping with an alcohol prep pad, cotton ball, or swab moistened with alcohol.”⁶

“After performing the piercing procedure the piercing gun should be thoroughly washed in warm water and detergent, and then disinfected before use on another client.”⁷



Inadequate Training

Although most stores will train their staff on how to use the guns, they do not need to follow the same skin penetration guidelines that body piercers are held accountable for. Generally, training is just watching a short video before practicing on a rubber ear or other staff and allegations have been made that some establishments do not teach their employees about the risks of piercing or how to deal with medical or mechanical complications like when a piercing gun gets stuck or malfunctions⁸.

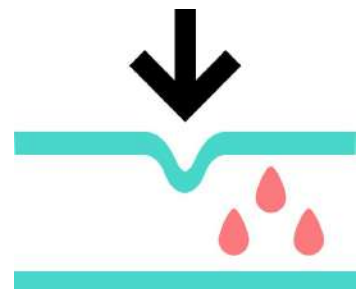


Surveys conducted in beauty and jewellery stores throughout England and the USA have shown that employees have had little knowledge of the risks related to the procedures they were performing.⁹

Blunt force trauma

Piercing guns use an excessive amount of pressure to force the dull object through the tissue, causing what is referred to medically as blunt force trauma.

Sometimes the gun's spring-loaded mechanism is not strong enough for the blunt jewellery and the mechanism may get stuck. This can result in unnecessary pain, discomfort, and damage to the client as well as a potential risk to the operator while trying to correct the problem. Although there is no documented failure rate, some gun operators report that it is a frequent occurrence.



When guns are used on cartilage and other more structural tissue, serious complications can occur, including shattering of the cartilage and severe scarring. Due to the reduced circulation in cartilage, healing times and risks of infections are significantly higher – especially with the use of a non-sterile instrument.

⁶ https://www.studex.com/sites/default/files/Studex_Universal_System_manual_2016.pdf

⁷ https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/Using-ear-and-nose-piercing-guns

⁸ <https://www.herfamily.ie/uncategorized/dads-warning-piercing-gun-gets-stuck-babys-ear-causing-damage-300880>

⁹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10389956/>

Australian piercing gun laws

Despite local regulations and manufacturer's instructions which specify hygienic cleaning in between every use, very few establishments follow these guides.

Different states also have different regulations on what parts of the body guns can be used, which is important to know to protect and assist your clients and community.

	State Regulation	Lobes	Helix	Nose	Navel
WA	The piercing gun (stud gun) is a specialised tool designed specifically for use on ear lobes, or the nose, or the navel. ¹⁰				
VIC	Stud guns are designed for ear lobes only, while nostril piercing guns are used for the nose ¹¹				
NSW	A person must not use an ear piercing gun to carry out a skin penetration procedure other than ear piercing. ¹²				
ACT	Closed ear piercing guns should be used to pierce lower ear lobes only and may not be used to pierce the nose or upper ear. ¹³				
QLD	An ear piercing gun should only be used on the ear lobe. ¹⁴				
NT	An ear piercing gun should only be used on the ear lobe. ¹⁵				
SA	Earlobe only and should not be used for any other body piercing ¹⁶				
NZ	Piercing guns are only appropriate for use when piercing ears (lower lobe only). ¹⁷				

¹⁰https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/Using-ear-and-nose-piercing-guns

¹¹<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/Api/downloadmedia/%7B2FD5585B-66CF-48B8-B315-7449F83EF9F6%7D>

¹²<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2000-0499>

¹³https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-09/Infection_control_guidelines_for_office_practices_and_other_community_based_services_2006.pdf

¹⁴<http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/media/pdf/20/40/17/body-piercing-so-you-are-thinking-of-gettin-v8>

¹⁵<https://digitallibrary.health.nt.gov.au/prodjsui/bitstream/10137/1151/1/Public%20and%20Environmental%20Health%20Guidelines%20for%20Hairdressing%2c%20Beauty%20Therapy%20and%20Body%20Art.pdf>

¹⁶<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/ae0a49c-1ab7-4702-849b-373311a300b0/skin-penetration-guide-10feb05.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-ae0a49c-1ab7-4702-849b-373311a300b0-nwJXZt4>

¹⁷<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/skinp.pdf>

International piercing gun laws

Territory	Lobes	Helix	Nose	Navel
México, South America ¹⁸				
New Jersey, United States ¹⁹				
Texas, United States ²⁰				
Oklahoma, United States ²¹				
Massachusetts, United States ²²				
Oregon, United States ²³				
Ontario, Canada ²⁴				
Pennsylvania, United States ²⁵				
Italy, Europe ²⁶				
Florida, United States ²⁷				
Philadelphia, United States ²⁸				
California, United States ²⁹				

Different countries and provinces around the world have different laws dictating the use of piercing guns, many of which have banned the use of them in anything but the ear lobe.

Mexico was the first country to entirely ban their use, at a national level, in their legislation under Article 224.7 which translates as: *"The use of piercing guns, or any other equipment, which, due to its inability to be sterilized or disinfected, in all its parts, constitutes a risk of disease transmission is prohibited."*



¹⁸http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5244887&fecha=24%2F04%2F2012&fbclid=IwAR2tsJFzIL7ruUluP0851PopGQ53jewkvzgBMtkmSsntPE9oR-cN70#:~:text=Art%C3%ADculo%20224%20Bis%206.,goce%20de%20sus%20facultades%20mentales

¹⁹<https://casetext.com/regulation/new-jersey-administrative-code/title-8-health/chapter-27-body-art-procedures/subchapter-9-ear-piercing/section-827-96-piercing-instrument-standards>

²⁰ <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/tattoo-piercing/PDF/TattooBodyPiercingRules.pdf>

²¹<http://okrules.elaws.us/oac/310:233-3-2?fbclid=IwAR0rVqo1pLS6D9AwJtcqj9nKouHntSinDshcMfe9zWug2141SeB4TntVXQ>

²²<https://www.mass.gov/doc/body-art-establishments-model-regulations/download?fbclid=IwAR2HEfTQaHiTx32zF1zEj67CIDsGgDpp48Emp7x8N-VjiU5vR1oShWfvGu0>

²³<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HLO/Rules/EBAP-Rules.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0mJ7qKiLuMP6PsS3xIlyz1PtImYYdvvCxsGhaMZ222dJ1QM3Zbzm58p4>

²⁴<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/g/2019/guide-ipac-personal-service-settings.pdf?la=en>

²⁵ <https://ecode360.com/15999679>

²⁶ https://www.camera.it/_dati/leg16/lavori/stampati/html/testoarticoli/articoli/16PDL0008810_Art__16_.html

²⁷ http://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/body-piercing/_documents/%20bodypiercing.pdf

²⁸ https://www.phila.gov/media/20181004140627/Body_Art_Regulations.pdf

²⁹ <https://law.justia.com/codes/california/2017/code-hsc/division-104/part-15/chapter-7/article-7/section-119327/>

What to do if a client comes in with a blunt force piercing

1. Educate

It is important that you educate your new client in a sensitive manner, whilst still informing that there are safer and cleaner ways to receive piercings. Take into consideration that they most likely did not know the negative effects of piercing guns, at the time of their decision. **Be Kind!**



Ensure that you also go through the several reasons why seeing a professional body piercer that uses single-use sterile needles is the best possible decision for all their future body piercings.

2. Inspect

You should initially inspect the piercing site to check for signs of irritation, infection or excessive damage to the area and surrounding tissue. This will change dramatically on how old the piercing is, so be sure to ask timeframes.



You should check both the front and back and look for irritation bumps, lumps or scar tissue as well as ensuring that the angle and placement are viable for the location.

3. Assist

Remember that you are trying to assist your client, but it is their body and their decision to agree to help.

- a. **Removal.** If still in its healing cycle and through cartilage or has a placement or angle that isn't viable then it should be suggested to immediately remove it and reduce the amount of permanent damage and increase the viability to have it re-done correctly at a later date.
- b. **Exchange.** If it is healing and safe to swap, you should suggest to your client to swap to sterile professional implant grade jewellery for the remainder of its healing cycle to minimize potential scar tissue.



4. Aftercare

The client should be informed of correct aftercare guidelines, as they may have been provided with outdated methods and harsh cleaning products which cause irritation and hinder healing.

It is also to explain that healing piercings require the right environment to heal, and that preventative measures are taken to avoid irritation.



Piercing-Guns are not used by professionals



- Poor jewellery design
- Inadequate Training
- Inability to be sterilised
- Bluntforce Trauma

Blunt force piercing jewellery is not used by professionals



- Pointed back
- Poor polish finish
- Non-verified metals
- Step-down edges
- Fixed Wearing Length
- Clasp mechanism buildup

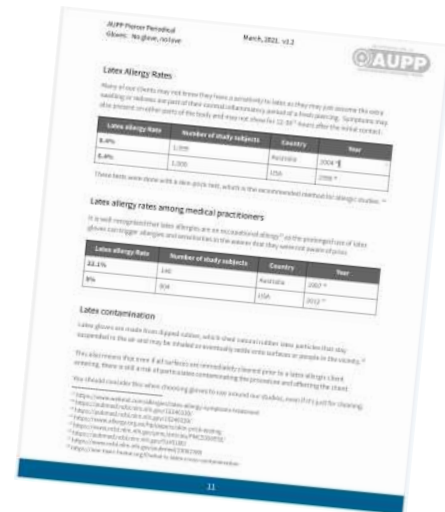
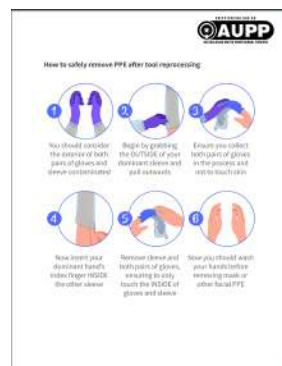
AUPP Member Corner

Australiasian Localisation

You asked us for more localised statistics and information more relevant to Australasia and its occupants - and we heard you!

We have gone back and updated our previous Gloves Piercer Periodical to focus on and compare Australasian latex statistics rather than international rates and we are proud to have also added a section on Latex Contamination.

Remember, all the infographics are available standalone for printing at www.safepiercing.org.au

[illegible]

Meeting Membership Requirements

Ensuring that you meet or exceed the minimum AUPP member requirements is an important part of our association's and industry's growth moving forward.

2020 Requirements

- Does not use piercing guns (including mechanical, spring loaded, or hand pressure systems)

2022 Requirements (previously 2021)

- No piercing guns used by any staff member (including mechanical, spring loaded, or hand pressure systems)

Supporter Highlight



5% OFF for AUPP Members

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