

Advice regarding ear piercings and tattoos

Body-piercing and tattooing are high-risk procedures that may lead to bacteraemia (infection of the blood) and endocarditis (infection within the heart). Our cardiologists unanimously discourage all forms of body-piercing and tattooing. This advice is endorsed by the NHS (National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence, 2016) and by the British Heart Foundation.

This advice also extends to ear-piercing. Although piercing of the ear lobe may be less risky than body-piercing, tattooing or ear-cartilage piercing, there are still reports in the literature of endocarditis following simple ear lobe piercing. Again, our cardiologists unanimously discourage all ear-piercings for these reasons.

If, despite consideration of this advice, you decide to proceed with ear lobe piercing we stress that it is imperative that it is performed under premises with appropriate health and safety regulations including the use of aseptic conditions and single-use disposable piercing cassettes. If your piercing site becomes infected at any stage, it is important to seek medical advice and prompt treatment with antibiotics.

This advice should be read in conjunction with the information about dental care and prevention of endocarditis which are also found on the ECHO website.

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March 2014