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# TEEN BODY PIERCING

## Ever more want to have holes in one

By Dan Parker  
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**A**udra Moore is a 15-year-old high school cheerleader in Corpus Christi, Texas, who makes A's and B's and wants to become a lawyer. She also has something that such an all-American teenager wouldn't have possessed just 10 years ago: a stainless-steel ring piercing her navel.

"Basically, I like the way they look," Audra says. "If you can pierce your ears, I don't see why it's wrong to pierce your bellybutton."

Once practiced mainly on society's fringe, body piercing — putting decorative rings through the nose, navel, eyebrows and other body parts — has increasingly become so mainstream that teen-agers all over the country are bugging their parents relentlessly for new holes in their bodies.

Even the most squeaky-clean teen-agers want titanium bellybutton rings, while many others petition their parents for gold eyebrow rings and diamond-studded nostril decorations.

"Before, it was largely the goth kids," says Jerry Brooks, a body piercer at 3-D Body Art Emporium in Corpus Christi, who sports a single piercing in his left ear. "Today, you have cheerleaders."

Under some states' laws, a piercing business cannot legally pierce a minor without seeing notarized documents with written consent from a parent or guardian. Many piercing businesses, however, say the legal paperwork isn't a deterrent. They report a steady stream of parents, children and notarized documents passing through their doors.

Piercing has gotten big among teen-agers partly because celebrities such as singer Britney Spears and former pro basketball player Dennis Rodman have made it so visible, says Clinton Sanders, author of the book "Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing."

For the teen-ager who is not deeply disaffected but wants to



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John Schubert (above) is not fond of the eyebrow piercing sported by his 15-year-old daughter, Rachel. After Rachel pierced her eyebrow with a safety pin, her mother took her to a business where it was done professionally.

show a touch of rebellion, piercing is attractive because some of it, such as tongue piercing and navel piercing, can be hidden, says Mr. Sanders, a professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut.

"Piercing is a great way to be outrageous in certain circles when you choose to be and be normal in other circumstances," he says.

Despite the growing normality of it all, not everyone is convinced that teen-agers need another hole in the head or navel. Many high schools prohibit visible piercings for boys and girls, except for earrings.

John Schubert, a Corpus Christi respiratory therapist, says he doesn't like his 15-year-old daughter Rachel's eyebrow piercing.

"Part of it has to do with my church. I'm a Latter-day Saint, and it's kind of like degradation of your body to me," says Mr. Schubert, 50. "I'm not down on people that do that, but . . . it's kind of offensive to me."

When Rachel saw all of her friends doing it, however, she thought otherwise. "It's just kind of a fun thing," she says. "You can change the jewelry, and sometimes you can get stuff that glows."

Rachel started asking to have her nose pierced when she was 12 or 13. When her parents refused, she poked an earring through her nostril and a safety pin through her eyebrow without anesthetic. Seeing that Rachel was going to make sure she was pierced one way or another, her



mother took her to a piercing shop to get it done safely, by professionals.

Should parents allow their teen-agers to have piercings? The answer to that depends on a parent's values, so there is no absolute right or wrong about it, says Richard Hey-

man, author of the book "How to Say It to Teens."

"What's important for parents is the health and happiness of the teen," says Mr. Heyman, a professor of communication and education at the University of Calgary in

Erica Loredo, left, 17, displays her pierced tongue, while her mother, Ida Salazar, shows off her pierced eyebrow.

Alberta. "So, if you go ahead and say, 'Do it,' make sure it is done right and the teen understands all the circumstances involved. And if you say no, then you want to make sure the teen understands that you know the consequences of this better than they do."

Parents should take the time to explain all the potential consequences of piercings, including the possibility that some people will dislike them instantly for their piercings and the possibility that it could be harder to land a job, Mr. Heyman says.

Piercing is not a source of controversy in Ida Salazar's Corpus Christi household. Mrs. Salazar has a pierced eyebrow, and her 17-year-old daughter, Erica Loredo, has a pierced tongue.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with body piercing or tattooing," says Mrs. Salazar, a homemaker. "It's art. It's a creation. It's awesome."

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