



CULTURALLY COMPETENT CARE

Body Piercing

Body art (i.e., tattooing, piercing) has been practiced from ancient times to the present. Body piercing is considered one of the oldest forms of body art. The reasons for modern body piercing include making a fashion statement, observing a rite of passage, and creatively expressing oneself through highly visible piercing of the ears, nose, eyebrow, and navel. Piercings of the tongue, nipples, and genitals are of a more sexual expression or function. With the increasing number of people with body piercings, it is important for the perioperative nurse to deliver culturally sensitive care to clients with body piercings. Understanding the cultural and social meanings of body piercing helps provide cultural sensitivity while ensuring client safety.

The nurse needs to ensure that this jewelry is removed in addition to the more traditional jewelry. Safety issues that can occur if the body-piercing jewelry is not removed include alternate site burns when using electrosurgery, pressure injuries from the jewelry, dislocation and aspiration of the jewelry during tracheal intubation, and possible inability to insert a urinary catheter because of genitalia piercings.

The perioperative nurse may need to help the client remove the jewelry. It is important that the jewelry not be damaged or the client harmed (physically or psychologically) when removing the jewelry. Certain tools may need to be available for removal of the jewelry.

Note: Reprinted from *AORN Journal*, vol. 79, B. G. Larkin, "The Ins and Outs of Body Piercing," pp. 333–334. Copyright 2004, with permission from AORN, Inc.