



Health & Safety Update – December 2017

Earrings - A constant Hot Topic at the Health and Safety team!

We don't believe a year of newsletters will ever pass without returning to the subject of jewellery.

The current 2016 edition of ['Safe Practice in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity'](#) covers this subject in Chapter 2 under the Umbrella of Teaching Safely - Principles of Organisation and Management.

It features in this chapter, specifically to remind staff teaching physical education, of the requirement for them to develop robust systems and procedures which not only need to be in place within the changing area to check that pupils fulfil this obligation to remove personal effects prior to participation. They also need to be discussed as a matter of course with students as part of teaching safety.

The focus must be on participation and promoting the best times in the school year for pupils to have a piercing. The specific area to refer to is Section 10, Clothing, Footwear and Personal effects

Personal effects, including jewellery and cultural or religious adornments

The below guidance, as with all procedures are only effective if applied consistently by all staff teaching PESSPA at the commencement of every SESSION.

- **All personal effects** should be removed. Staff should always give a verbal reminder to students and, where necessary, visually monitor the group and/or individuals. Particular vigilance may be required when dealing with body jewellery.
- If items cannot be removed, staff need to take action to try to **make the situation safe**. In most cases, this may mean adjusting the activity in some way or, where a risk assessment allows, making the item in question safe.

Earrings: Students unable to remove earrings should be required to make them safe by taping, front and back, which may offer a measure of protection. The taping should be sufficient to prevent the stud post penetrating the bone behind the ear should an unintentional blow be received (e.g. from someone or from equipment such as a ball).

This taping may be done at home for younger children or prior to the lesson for older students. Staff are not required to remove or tape earrings for students.

Where taping is utilised, the teacher supervising the group maintains the legal responsibility to **ensure the taping is effective** for purpose. Where staff consider the taping to be unsatisfactory to permit safe participation, they will need to consider alternative involvement in the lesson for the student.

The use of **retainers** (flat studs that retain the piercing when earrings or studs are removed) is becoming more common as a form of acceptable substitution where total removal is not

possible. Provided these are flat and cannot cause damage if a blow or ball hits the side of the head, the level of risk is clearly reduced.

Expander earrings are worn by some students. These are generally hollow circles used to stretch the piercing, making a large hole in the ear lobe. These are clearly not safe for close-contact physical activity, and should be taped effectively as described above

A new development is for pupils to have piercings through the ear cartilage. This is particularly problematic as the healing process for this is significantly longer, and there is a general belief that taking these piercings out for even a short period of time can result in them healing up. However, a teacher cannot allow a pupil to participate if they believe there is a risk of injury so the principles outlined above still remain. Knowing that this is a source of potential conflict, it is good practice to work with pupils and parents before the event. Staff need to provide clarity that ears should not be pierced in this way, as it could result in pupils being unable to take part in physical education, school sport physical activity for a considerable period of time.

Education and communication are key to involving the pupils in safe practice. A pro-active approach by all staff will ensure piercings form part of a readily available school policy on personal effects, including jewellery and cultural or religious adornments. Clearly understood protocols will ensure pupils and parents are aware of school expectations.

It is also worth noting that your employer (local authority/trust etc.) may have their own policy on this matter and, if this is the case, it is essential that you follow whatever guidance is provided.