



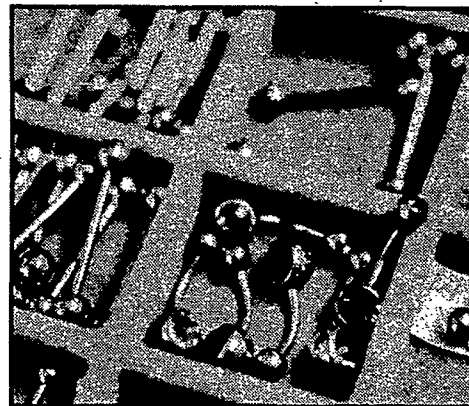
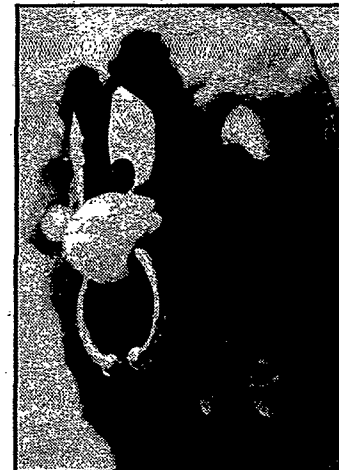
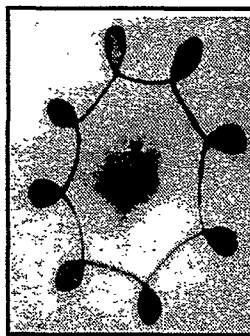
"Some people think if a guy has an earring he's gay. But if he wants an earring, he wants an earring. People take it one step too far," Shawna said.

"It's not a big deal anymore," Erin agreed.

On the other hand, body piercing does seem to be a big deal with the piercees' parents. Erin, for one, said her mother wonders just how far she plans to go with her fashion statements.

"She doesn't want me to do it anymore, because she thinks (employers) won't hire me," Erin said. "But I already have two part-time jobs."

Chris said he has struck a halfway agreement with his parents on the issue of his eye-



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brow piercing.

"They didn't like the idea of it. But they said if I do it, I've got to make sure that I don't (wear jewelry) at church or family gatherings," Chris said.

No matter what others might say about body piercings, Shawna maintained that every person has the right to his or her own individual style.

"It's my body," Shawna commented.

Erin added that her father "thought it was stupid" when she told him she wanted to get her tongue pierced.

"It probably is, but it's fun," she concluded with a laugh — a laugh accompanied by a gleam from her tongue barbell.

## COMING NEXT WEEK: Devotion to saints

### How do you feel about?????

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"I'm probably just a wimp," she admitted with a laugh.

Apparently, discomfort levels also vary among teens when they go to a piercing shop. Although Erin said she only felt slight pain when her belly button was pierced, at least one other acquaintance wasn't so fortunate.

"My friend Tina had hers done, and she passed out," Erin reported.

Meanwhile, Chris in Macedon said he's leaning toward getting his eyebrow pierced because he's heard that "it doesn't hurt as much as other (body) parts."

Shawna and Erin noted that tongue piercings involve even more inconveniences.

"My best friend had her tongue pierced, and she had to eat Jello for a week," Shawna said.

"My tongue didn't hurt at all, but it was swollen for two days. I had to eat mashed potatoes," Erin reported.

Erin did point out that she adjusted quickly to her

new piece of jewelry, saying her barbell has not affected her eating habits or speech.

"I forget it's there," she said.

Yet Erin doesn't forget about the threat of mouth infections, so she makes sure her jewelry stays properly cleaned.

"You have to be real careful, especially with the tongue. I don't want my tongue to fall off," Erin said.

With all the potential complications from tongue piercing, John in Bath said he's not so sure he wants to go that route anymore.

"I kind of got discouraged when I found that your tongue gets swelled up. It looks kind of painful," John said.

John also said that he's already dismissed the possibility of an ear piercing.

"I'll stay away from earrings. They're a little too feminine," he remarked.

However, Shawna and Erin claimed that a male can wear earrings and still be considered masculine.



Renta Pruner, 24, of Akron, N.Y., has her tongue pierced by Noreen Stanford, a piercing artist at Wildside Exotic Piercing, Monroe Avenue, Rochester, Oct. 8. The piercing took less than 2 minutes.

Been thinking about getting your tongue pierced? You might want to proceed with caution, based on some points raised in an Aug. 31 *Time* magazine article.

The author, Christine Gorman, wrote that dentists are starting to see a lot of problems they never expected: broken teeth, blood clots, patients checking on loose jewelry.

According to the article, patients who chew on their rings and barbels can cause such extensive harm that teeth might actually become damaged beyond repair.

Dr. Carl Gerard, a Rochester oral surgeon, said that one patient's misfortune spurred him to circulate the *Time* article among his colleagues. Gerard reported that he recently treated a young man in his early 20s who had chipped some teeth because of his mouth jewelry.

He lost two teeth from biting on the bar. That was the reason I sent the article out,

Gerard said.

The *Time* piece also stated that tongues can swell to a most twice the normal size after being

pierced, causing breathing difficulties. In addition, choking can

occur from loose or unscrewed jewelry, and the tongue is vulnerable to such infections as hepatitis and HIV.

Gerard said that tongue infections, due to the high volume of bacteria in the mouth, can be more dangerous than infections from piercings on other parts of the body.

It scares me considerably, because it's something which could become very severe," Gerard said. For this reason, he said, would-be piercees should be extremely careful when selecting a piercing service.

Gerard noted that tongue piercing has been a popular practice for quite some time. I've seen quite a number of piercings over quite a few years," Gerard said.

It's gone from stainless steel bars to new plastic types which will gum up when you're under a back light.

Meanwhile, the *Time* article's author appears to be strongly opposed to the use of tongue jewelry.

Even if you've already pierced your tongue, you can still come to your senses," Gorman wrote. The body has an amazing ability to heal itself. If you would just leave your jewelry on the nightstand, the hole in your tongue will eventually close.

But Gorman's judgment seems to suggest that young people will doggedly continue the trend of tongue piercing.

You absolutely must be smart in your choice," Gorman wrote. At the very least, her advice would be to wear a barbell that is made of a safe material, like titanium, and to have it checked out by a dentist.

## tongue tied

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