

We Do Self-Mutilation : Tattooing and Piercing

was mistaken. I had the opportunity to watch the guy before me get his tattoo. It was a relief to see that it was nothing like I had imagined. There was a few drops of blood but otherwise it was very clean.

I will admit it, I was afraid of the pain. A girl had told me a horror story about having to bite down on a popsicle stick! So, I brought a friend to hold my hand. My artist used the needle on me without ink, to show me what it would feel like. This was to give me the chance to chicken out in case I wanted to. The needle was surprisingly painless although it sounded eerily like a dentist drill.

There is a wide range of prices for tattoos, depending on such factors as size, colour, and complexity of design. Artists usually charge a base fee. The tattoo I chose was small with only two colours, so she charged me the base fee of \$25. My design is only 3-4 centimetres long, so the procedure took about 20 minutes. The artist chatted with me the whole time, showing me



her own tattoos -- she would practice new designs on herself.

Afterward, the tattoo had to be bandaged and she gave me detailed instructions on how to maintain it. For the first week, it had to be kept dry and lotion was constantly applied.

Admittedly, it was messy for the first week. It was a bit bloody and there was scab. She instructed me not to get it wet, particularly in chlorine. Due to circumstances, I had to go into a pool which caused my colour to fade somewhat. Otherwise it looked great

when the bandage came off.

I was worried that the tattoo would feel different, that the skin would be rough, but it isn't. Most days I forget that it is even there. After 3 years, I still have no regrets. The only problem is, now I want another one.

It was a dark and stormy night -- the air was still, you could hear the cockroaches scuttling across the floor -- then suddenly-OUCH! I caught my belly button ring on my teddy bear. Just before Christmas I bought myself an early present; I got my belly button pierced. To answer your first question-- no, it didn't hurt.

After months of chickening out I finally just walked in to Cleopatra's and said "Hi. I'd like to have my belly button pierced." Twenty minutes later I walked out feeling nauseous and exhilarated at the same time. Cleopatra's is as of yet, the only place on PEI that will do navel piercing, and although my experience proved uneventful I have a few warnings to others considering this procedure.

First of all, DO NOT I repeat DO NOT let them use a gun. Ear-piercing guns were designed for ears, not navels. Needles are the correct way to have your navel pierced. You can not have this procedure done on the Island so I would suggest waiting until you go "across" before you attempt to have your navel pierced. Secondly, wherever you get it done, do not let them put a stud into the hole. There are special earrings designed for belly buttons, they have a flat back but are curved on the front to give the illusion of a hoop. Make sure that the area is clean and that the person piercing you cleans all of the instruments they use. Infection in this area is very dangerous so remember

to clean your belly button at least twice daily with either hydrogen peroxide or a special earring disinfectant solution available at Faces.

My belly button is almost completely healed and I can't wait until the summer so I can show it off. Every time I wear a crop top I get lots of people wanting to touch it and turn the hoops. When people ask to touch it, don't let them unless they disinfect their hands first. My mother was shocked that I actually went ahead and did this, so were most of my friends. I did it 'cause I thought it would look sexy, and so far most of my male friends agree. Piercing is a creative way to adorn your body without worrying about the permanency of the action. If, and when, I get tired of having my belly pierced I can just take out the earring and in a couple of months it will heal. I'm not tired of it yet, actually I want to get my belly pierced again, so then I'd have two holes.

