

Ear nodules due to embedded earring backs

Sir,

The desire to modify a person's appearance is a phenomenon that can be traced back to the beginning of human kind. Ear piercing has been practiced in nearly all cultures around the globe to achieve the same. It is a well recognized fact that piercing the ears may result in different type of complications. Herein we report a case of a teenager who presented with peculiar ear nodules.

A 14-year-old female presented with three painful nodular swellings at the back of both ears of three weeks duration. Her ears were pierced three months ago by an ear piercing gun. She changed the earrings on her own after three weeks and replaced them with fancy earrings, which fell unnoticed. Since last three weeks she had noticed painful firm swellings at the back of her ears, at the site of piercing. On examination three firm nodules, one on the right and two on the left, were found at the piercing sites at the back of her ears [Figures 1-2]. The nodules were explored by a small posterior incision under local anesthesia. The removed materials were found to be the embedded backings of her previously pierced earrings [Figure 3]. A seven-day course of antibiotic treatment was given for control of local infection and the patient was found to be free of symptoms on follow-up examinations.

The piercing of various body sites has been practiced for thousands of years. The reasons for piercing have included adornment, rites of passage, religious purposes and sexual practices.^[1] Ear piercing can result in various complications which are well documented. Minor complications are seen in about 20% of individuals while major complications occur in about 3% of individuals. Various complications include allergic reactions, infection, perichondritis, exuberant granulation tissue, epidermal cyst formation, traumatic tear, hepatitis, localized argyria, keloid formation, pressure sores, aspiration, ingestion and embedded earrings.^[2-4] More uncommon presentations of embedded jewelry like sarcoid-like granuloma formation and granulomatous lymphoplasia have also been reported in the literature.^[5,6] In nearly all these cases, the complications were seen during or following ear piercing, unlike the present case where it occurred long after wearing them.

With the present trend of piercing body sites other than the traditional earlobes, newer complications are now being increasingly seen in the medical setting. The health care professionals need to be vigilant to recognize and manage such complications.



Figure 1: Nodules right ear



Figure 2: Embedded backings

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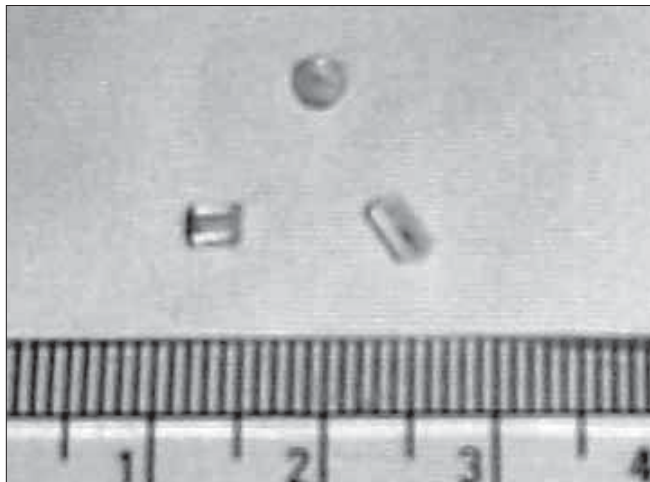


Figure 3: Embedded ear rings

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