

UNDERGROUND

TATTOO & PIERCING CO

Metals and what's best for Initial Piercings and healed ones too.

There are a few materials approved by the [Association of Professional Piercers \(APP\)](#), but implant-grade titanium is the one most piercers recommend for initial piercings.

Here's why:

- It's nickel-free. Nickel is the most common contact allergen in the world, according to the [European Centre for Allergy Research Foundation](#). It's regularly found in jewellery for piercings. Titanium doesn't contain any nickel, which makes it safe for people with sensitive skin or a [nickel allergy](#).
- It has a high strength-to-density ratio. In other words, titanium is considerably less dense than stainless steel and other metals, but just as strong (if not more so). This makes it durable and less likely to bend or break.
- It's lightweight. That low density we just talked about is what makes titanium jewellery lighter than those made with other metals.

- It can be anodised. Titanium's dark metallic colour is cool as is. But unlike other stainless steel, you can get titanium in other colour's. This is done through anodising, an electrochemical process that changes the surface colour while maintaining safety.

So for Initial Piercing this is the Number 1 choice at Underground.

FYI

By implant-grade, we're talking titanium that's been certified for medical use and meets the standards for quality and safety set out by the [American \(now International\) Society for Testing and Materials Standard \(ASTM\)](#) or the [International Standards Organization \(ISO\)](#).

Look for jewelry made from titanium with these compliance designations:

- ASTM F-136
- ISO 5832-3
- ASTM F-67

Surgical steel

Surgical steel is a popular choice for piercings because it's affordable, durable, and safe for most. It does contain some nickel, but thanks to a low rate of transfer, your skin is unlikely to notice.

Just remember that not all steel jewellery is of the same quality. Only a few specific grades are biocompatible, meaning the jewellery won't oxidise, tarnish or react with skin.

Make sure any steel jewellery you choose is one of the following:

- ASTM F-138 compliant
- ISO 5832-1 compliant
- ISO 10993-6 compliant
- ISO 10993-10 compliant
- ISO 10993-11 compliant

Niobium

Like titanium, niobium is hypoallergenic. It can also be anodised, so you can find it in different colours.

These similarities — and its lower cost — make it a popular option that's been used by piercers for a few years now.

If you go this route, look for unalloyed niobium that's ASTM B392 compliant.

14 karat gold

Gold is another safe-for-most option, as long as you stick with gold that's 14 karat, nickel-free, and biocompatible.

Biocompatible polymers (plastics)

For piercings in parts of the body with high movement, you'll want extra flexibility and comfort. So, jewellery made from a biocompatible plastic may be the way to go.

The same goes for people seeking a substitute for metal jewellery because of sensitivity or budget concerns.

Bioplast, Tygon Medical/Surgical Tubing, and PTFE (Teflon) are safe for new piercings.

Platinum

If you can drop the cash, platinum piercings are a safe and more expensive alternative to titanium piercings — if you can find them.

Body jewellery made from this precious metal can be hard to come by because platinum is expensive and not as easy to work with as other materials.

Materials to avoid

When it comes to initial piercings, there are some materials that should be avoided because they can increase the likelihood of having an allergic reaction, poor healing, and [rejection](#).

Here are the materials to avoid using on a fresh piercing:

Gold-plated

Gold-plated jewellery isn't recommended for new piercings. This goes for gold overlay or gold vermeil jewellery, which are just other terms for gold-plated.

Even if the jewellery is coated in 14 karat gold or higher, the gold is simply a thin coating over a metal base made of different alloys, including nickel.

The gold coating can wear off or flake, exposing your fresh wound to said alloys.

Sterling silver

You'll want to skip pieces made from sterling silver until your piercing's fully healed.

Sterling silver is made primarily of silver, but it does contain other metals (usually copper). Those other metals can tarnish and cause skin irritation and staining.

Gold higher than 18 karats

You'd think a higher karat gold would be better, right? Nope. The higher you go, the softer the gold. The softer the gold, the more prone it is to nicks and scratches that can irritate your skin and damage tissue.

For new piercings, 14 karat gold is the sweet spot.

Gold lower than 14 karats

Jewellery made from 10 karat gold may give you the bling you like for less, but it isn't necessarily safe for your body.

Low karat [gold](#) contains higher amounts of other metals, including nickel and copper.

After the initial piercing

Once a piercing is fully healed, quality materials are still important, but you can mix things up and relax a little.

That said, you'll still need to be mindful of sensitive skin and allergies. Sticking with titanium jewellery, even after the initial piercing, will spare you an itchy, scaly red rash (aka [contact dermatitis](#)).

Here are a few other things to keep in mind, regardless of the material you choose going forward:

- Adornments like gemstones should be set securely into the metal to keep them from shifting or falling out.
- The jewellery surface should be polished and smooth, because a rough or jagged surface could cause irritation and tearing.
- Jewellery made of low-grade metals will eventually tarnish, scratch, or chip. And, they can damage healthy, healed skin.

The Bottom Line

For Initial Piercings it's best to use Implant grade high polished Titanium or 14K Solid Gold.