



Studded Skin

Elaine Davidson's body sparkles. That's because her skin is punctured with 6,725 metal piercings. Davidson, who lives in Scotland, holds the Guinness World Record for the most permanent piercings of anyone on Earth. If she were to put all the jewelry she's wearing from head to toe on a scale, it would weigh in at about 3 kilograms (6.6 pounds).

Unlike Davidson, most people don't have more than a couple of piercings. These are often in earlobes, a place

not likely to be the site of major health problems. Poking holes in other parts of the body can be more risky. Piercings in *cartilage*, the rigid connective tissue that gives the ear and nose their shape, are hard to clean and can become infected. Belly-button rings can catch on clothing and tear your skin, and mouth and lip rings make chewing and swallowing difficult.

"Tongue piercings are also bad because they can chip or break teeth," says Dr. Amy Derick, a dermatologist in Barrington, Illinois. Some people

have even swallowed their jewelry! Additionally, many people are allergic to some of the metals in body jewelry.

If Davidson ever decides to take out all of her ear, nose, body, and tongue rings, she won't look like a block of holey Swiss cheese. That is, except where her heavy jewelry will have stretched open some holes permanently. Other holes, like those in a pierced ear, will close naturally over time. But she still may be left with scars that look like permanent pimples.

— Corey Binns