

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum

Lesson title:

Health Risks of Body Art

Grade level:

6-8

Subject Area:

Health, Life Science

Duration:

Two class periods

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

1. Explore what is involved in body piercing, tattoos, and cosmetic surgery
2. Discuss why people engage in these activities
3. Research the health risks associated with these activities

Materials:

- Paper and pencils
- Newsprint and markers
- Computer with Internet access (optional but very helpful)

Procedures:

1. Open the lesson with a discussion about current fashion trends that involve minor alterations to a part of the body. What trends are students attracted to? What trends do they think improve their appearance? List their ideas on a piece of newsprint. Their thoughts may include the following:
 - Dyeing their hair
 - Wearing tight pants
 - Wearing makeup
 - Piercing their ears
 - Wearing black
 - Wearing nail polish on their fingers and toes
 - Getting their hair styled
2. Tell students that during this lesson, they will examine three extreme fashion trends that involve altering the body and are difficult or impossible to undo. The trends are

permanent tattoos, body piercing, and cosmetic surgery. To make each of these changes, people must either undergo a procedure or an operation.

3. Write each of these terms on the chalkboard or on a piece of newsprint. Discuss with the class what each one means; explanations follow:
 - a. *Tattoos*. Created by an electric instrument made of needles, tattoos are permanent ink marks or designs. The needles penetrate the first two layers of the skin. A professional tattoo artist must have a permit from the local health department to operate a tattoo parlor.
 - b. *Body piercings*. Piercings are holes put in the ears, nose, navel, eyebrows, lips, tongue, or other parts of the body for the purpose of putting jewelry in them. They must be done according to proper sanitary procedures. The area surrounding a piercing must be washed twice a day with antibacterial soap.
 - c. *Cosmetic surgery*. Several forms of cosmetic surgery are discussed in this lesson: liposuction, breast enhancement, and rhinoplasty, often known as a nose job. Liposuction is a surgical procedure that removes fatty tissue in the legs, buttocks, abdomen, back, arms, face, neck, or other area of the body. Done properly, the procedure is safe and leaves only tiny scars. Breast enhancement involves inserting implants, usually bags filled with saltwater, into the breasts. Some risks are associated with this procedure, including rippling of the skin and the possibility of other health problems from an implant. Rhinoplasty is a surgical procedure that alters the nose's size or shape. As with any operation, there are some risks involved, including a possibility that narrowing a nasal passage could result in breathing difficulties.
4. Divide students into pairs. Have each pair select one of the three procedures described in step 3 to research. After they've done the research, have each pair answer the questions that follow. Related Web sites are also listed.

Questions for Each Group

- a. What is involved in getting a tattoo, having a body piercing done, or having cosmetic surgery performed? Describe how each is done.
- b. What are the benefits of engaging in this activity?
- c. What are the short-term health risks?
- d. What are the long-term health risks?
- e. Why do people engage in these activities? What is the attraction?
- f. Based on what you have learned, would you engage in this activity now or when you get older? Give reasons to support your ideas.

Web Sites

Tattoos and Body Piercing

<<http://www.jour.unr.edu/outpost/specials/genx.tattoo1.html>>

<<http://204.202.137.111/sections/living/DailyNews/piercings991026.html>>

<http://or.essortment.com/bodypiercingin_rbxe.htm>
<<http://www.childrenshospitals.net/nachri/news/tattoos.html>>

Cosmetic Surgery

<<http://www.covenanthealth.com/features/health/cosm/COSM4355.htm>>
<<http://liposymposium.com/details/procedure/>>
<<http://danmillsmid.com/Bodysculpting/Information/liposuction.htm>>
<<http://www.plasticsurgery.org/surgery/nose.htm>>
<<http://www.facial-plastic-surgery.org/patient/procedures/rhinoplasty.html>>

5. Give the students the rest of the class period to complete their research and answer the questions. During the next class period, have the pairs give a brief oral presentation to the class. Presentations should answer all the questions in step 4.
6. Discuss with students the findings of each pair of students. Ask students why they think young people are attracted to these activities, especially when so many health risks are involved. If one reason is so that young people can assert themselves as individuals, ask students to think of safer alternatives. How can young people make a statement about their individuality without hurting their bodies?
7. Conclude the lesson by discussing with the class what they learned about making good choices regarding their bodies. Help students understand that the key to making healthful choices is to have information that can be applied to their own lives. All the activities discussed in this lesson pose some health risks. Ask students whether learning about those risks changed their thinking about the activities. Knowing what they know now, would they engage in them?

Discussion Questions:

1. What role does peer pressure play in encouraging young people to get tattoos and body piercings? Do young people feel they must do these things to be “cool”? Give reasons to support your ideas.
2. Imagine that you are with a group of friends who decide to get some tattoos. How would you handle the situation? Would you go along with your friends or refuse to go? Give reasons to support your ideas.
3. What current fashion trends do you think best express who you are? For example, would dyeing your hair red project the right image? Try to think of an activity that carries as few health risks as possible. Alternatively, think of other things you do that also express who you are. Consider what activities you enjoy or avoid, as well as what you talk about with friends and family.

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate how well students can research different topics and answer assigned questions, apply what they learned to their own lives, and participate in class discussions on sensitive topics:

Three points: demonstrated strong research skills, above-average ability to answer questions accurately and sensitively, strong ability to apply what was learned to the student's own life, and maturity and insight in discussing sensitive topics.

Two points: demonstrated on-grade-level research skills, average ability to answer questions accurately and sensitively, average ability to apply what was learned to the student's own life, and some maturity and insight in discussing sensitive topics.

One point: demonstrated weak research skills, slightly below-average ability to answer questions accurately and sensitively, difficulty applying what was learned to the student's own life, and difficulty discussing sensitive topics with the class.

Extension:

Fashion Trends of the Past

Have students research fashion trends of the past. Students can select any time period (for example, the flappers of the 1920s or the hippies of the 1960s). Have them answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of clothes did people wear during the time period you selected?
2. How did women wear their hair? How did men wear their hair?
3. Did people engage in any behaviors that presented health risks? If so, were they aware of those risks? Did they change their behavior if they became aware of the risks?
4. What do you think of the fashion trends from the time period you selected? Do you think they are attractive? Why or why not? Give reasons to support your ideas.
5. Why do you think people may not find former fashion trends attractive? Why do you think fashion trends change?
6. Did people do anything during the time you selected to permanently alter their bodies? If so, what?

Students can begin their research by visiting the Web sites listed here. After they've conducted their research, have students present their findings as a visual display. Make sure the display includes when the fashion was in style, what it looked like, and how long it was popular.

20th-Century Fashion History

<www.costumegallery.com/1970.htm>

Hairstyle History

<www.costumegallery.com/hairstyles.htm>

Beauty World: Fashion

<www.beautyworlds.com/fashion.htm>

Suggested Reading:

Am I Thin Enough Yet?: The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialization of Identity

Sharlene Hesse-Biber. Oxford University Press, 1997.

Many women and girls, some as young as six years old, struggle with an obsession to control their weight and stay as thin as possible. Today men are feeling the effects of this obsession as well. This book explains how the forces of society, popular culture, and the health and fitness industry have contributed to a “cult of thinness.” Many case studies help illustrate the points made. Extensive notes for each chapter are included.

Vanity Rules: A History of American Fashion and Beauty

Dorothy Hoobler and Thomas Hoobler. Twenty-First Century Books, 2000.

We tend to think that the desire to have a “perfect” body and to look a certain way is a recent development in our culture, but it isn't. In *Vanity Rules*, we can follow fashion and its influence on the body, from colonial days to the present. Describing trends that are at times humorous (such as the stuffing of cork into one's cheeks to achieve a plump look) and at times painful (such as the wearing of corsets tight enough to displace internal organs), this book reveals it all. Illustrations and photographs enrich the text.

Vocabulary:

body piercing

Definition: Putting a hole for jewelry in the ears, nose, navel, eyebrow, lips, tongue, or other part of the body.

Context: After getting a **body piercing**, make sure you clean the area twice a day with antibacterial soap.

breast enhancement

Definition: A surgical procedure in which an incision is made in the breast and implants, usually bags filled with saltwater, are inserted.

Context: Although it carries some risk, **breast enhancement** is one of the more popular forms of cosmetic surgery.

liposuction

Definition: A surgical procedure that removes fatty tissue in the legs, buttocks, abdomen, back, arms, face, neck, or other part of the body.

Context: For **liposuction** to be effective, an individual should be of average weight and have extra fat in specific areas.

rhinoplasty

Definition: A surgical procedure designed to change the size or shape of the nose for either cosmetic or health purposes.

Context: The techniques of **rhinoplasty** have been perfected so that the incisions are well hidden.

tattoo

Definition: A permanent design created on the skin by an electric instrument made of needles.

Context: Before getting a **tattoo**, it is important to know that it will be expensive and difficult to remove in the future.

Academic Standards:

The following standards are from the American Association for Health Education for students in grades six through eight:

1. Students will analyze the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills to enhance health.

This lesson plan adheres to the standards set forth in the *National Science Education Standards*, in particular the category Science in Personal and Social Perspectives.

Credit: Marilyn Fenichel, freelance writer and curriculum developer.

This lesson was created in consultation with Shauna Felton, middle school health teacher.

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