

# BYRDIE

SKIN ■ TATTOOS & PIERCINGS

## Rook Piercing 101: We Reveal All You Need to Know

written by [AMY LAWRENSON](#) UPDATED NOV 11, 2020

reviewed by [DR. DENDY ENGELMAN](#) / Board-Certified Dermatologist



The rook piercing is one of the more unusual inner-ear piercings. The tragus and the daith tend to be more popular choices, but who wants to look the same as everyone else? Besides looking fresh and delicate, the rook piercing is versatile and it's having quite a moment right now.

"We are finding that after our customer has his/her first few lobe piercings, they then look to something more creative and the rook is now one of their favorites," says Nadine McCarthy Kahane, founder and CEO of Stone and Strand, a fine jewelry and piercing shop in NYC.

No piercing is pain-free, but we wanted to find out how painful the rook piercing is, how long it takes to heal, what types and materials are best, and whether it will suit you. We called on a piercer and dermatologists to educate us on everything you need to know about this cool and niche piercing. Keep scrolling!



## FAST FACTS

### ROOK PIERCING

**PLACEMENT:** The upper part of the ear on the ridge between the outer and inner sections of the ear.

**PRICING:** Between \$30 and \$80, though jewelry cost is not included.

**PAIN LEVEL:** 6/10

**HEALING TIME:** A rook piercing typically heals within six to 12 months, according to piercer Rhianna Jones.

**AFTERCARE:** Wash the piercing area gently with water and soap twice a day. Dry it with paper towels if needed to keep the bacteria from normal towels away and avoid going into public bodies of water such as swimming pools and hot tubs.

## What is a Rook Piercing?

A rook piercing is a cartilage piercing in the uppermost ridge of your inner ear, located above the tragus in the antihelix. The piercer uses a hollow needle to go through the cartilage of your rook and then insert the jewelry. Rook piercings are safe as long as they are done by a professional using a sterile technique.

According to [Rhianna Jones](#), a London-based piercer at [The Circle London](#), the piercing is suitable for most, but as each person's ear anatomy is different, a small number of people may find they are not able to get it. "I will always work with each client to try to position jewelry to best complement both their anatomy and any existing piercings," she says.



## The Piercing Chart



## Pain and Healing Time

When we think about having a piercing, one of the first (and common) worries is if it hurts. Although pain is relative, medical and cosmetic dermatologist **Gary Goldenberg, MD**, of Goldenberg Dermatology alerts: "This type of piercing goes through a very thick layer of cartilage, which is usually more painful and takes a little more time to heal." For example, lobe piercings that don't involve cartilage take about six weeks to heal, while cartilage piercings like the rook or snug may take six months or longer before it's fully healed.

"The procedure is definitely more high risk than a lobe piercing because of a much higher risk of infection," says Goldenberg. "The sequelae of infection of cartilage is also a lot more serious than the earlobe and treatment is more involved."

## Cost of a Rook Piercing

Where you live and where you get it done will definitely determine a price range, but it's usually between \$30 and \$80 (plus the jewelry). "I charge the same for any ear cartilage piercings with the actual cost depending on the jewelry you choose," says Jones.

For example, at Studs, New York's Kaia Gerber-approved piercing studio, the service fee is \$35 plus the cost of the jewelry you'd like most. While at Stone and Strand, the service is complimentary with the purchase of jewelry (it starts around \$60 and goes up to three digit options).



## Aftercare

"As with any piercing, this is dependent on how well you follow your aftercare and your general health. Aftercare should be followed until the piercing is fully healed as recommended by your piercer. It is always advisable to try

to avoid sleeping on any new ear piercing until fully healed as it can cause problems and delay the healing," notes Jones.

When it comes to properly clean and care, dermatologist Kristina Goldenberg, MD, says that one of the most common mistakes is using hydrogen peroxide or alcohol on the area. "Washing the area gently with soap and water two to three times per day suffices. If there are any signs of infections I recommend adding a topical antibiotic right away," she says.

## Side Effects of Piercing

The risks of the procedure are infection, which can potentially lead to permanent deformity of the tissue that was pierced. Extreme and prolonged pain is a definite side effect. If it's not done correctly or is placed too superficially, a rook piercing is at risk of rejection.

- **Infection:** Kristina Goldenberg alerts to some of the symptoms of infection to be aware of: "Extreme pain or tenderness on palpation, drainage of pus around the site of the piercing and burning sensation." It's important to see a doctor if you notice some of them.
- **Allergic reactions:** Nickel, copper, and lower quality gold are types of metals that can cause some allergies. "Hypoallergenic metal is best for all piercings," says Kristina Goldenberg.
- **Ear deformity:** According to Goldenberg, "Infections can potentially lead to permanent deformity of the tissue that was pierced." That's why you should always look for a trusted professional piercer.



## How to Change Out a Rook Piercing

Remember our tip to leave it alone? So yes, you have to wait until the piercing is completely healed to remove it. If in doubt if your cartilage piercing is healed and ready for new jewelry, the good thing is that most piercing studios can do this for you (some of them even do it for free). So it's something to ask about it when you get your rook pierced.

At Stone and Strand, for example, they advise customers to go back to the studio to change out their jewelry. "It is best practice to follow up with your piercer after new piercings, as this allows them to check in on the healing process, and to swap out jewelry for a more appropriate/comfortable size if necessary," explains Kahane.

## What Type of Jewelry Is Used for a Rook Piercing?

For the initial healing period, Jones recommends using a bar, but you can choose either a bar or hoop, unlike the daith, which is better suited to a hoop.

- **Barbell:** A barbell is a metal bar with balls on the ends and one of the balls is removable. Depending on the ear anatomy, it has to be smaller to fit the rook area.
- **Curved barbell:** A 16-gauge curved barbell has less movement than a ring and can be more comfortable. Plus, it shows more!
- **Hoops:** The favorite option for the rook piercing fans is also the hardest to heal, especially the ones with different shapes and textures.

## What Jewelry Material Is Used for Rook Piercing?

According to Kahane, high-quality materials are the most important things when getting specialty piercings. These are the safest materials:

- **Gold:** Kristina Goldenberg says that 24k gold is always a great option because it does not contain other metals.
- **Titanium:** One of the best choices for nickel-free and hypoallergenic jewelry. It's also durable and comfortable to wear.