NYES | Health and Safety

JEWELLERY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

General Statement

The wearing of personal effects, such as jewellery and watches, can present risks of injury to the person and/or others involved in an activity. Exposure to the risk of injury from such items can principally occur in Physical Education.

General Aims

To ensure that employees and others, such as school pupils, taking part in Physical Education lessons are aware;-

- of the hazards of wearing jewellery & watches
- that control measures are in place to avoid the risk of injury
- that to enable individuals to understand that, as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

Scope

This procedure applies where persons who are wearing jewellery and watches can potentially expose themselves and others to the risk of injury while taking part in Physical Education.

There have been serious incidents and legal cases involving jewellery in PE and physical activity and this procedure protects against that happening. It is not just about making the wearer of the ear-ring safe, it is about keeping everyone safe thus making a parental disclaimer ineffective and legally unenforceable.

Procedure

The following advice applies to ALL body jewellery and watches, except for bracelets worn for religious reasons that cannot be removed. These bracelets will be covered with a sweatband and secured by tape.

1. There should be risk assessments in place for all PE activities e.g., rugby, football, hockey, etc. The risk assessments should be made specific to each activity. Wearing of jewellery should be identified as a hazard in each risk assessment with a subsequent control measure (exemption from activity, removal of jewellery/watch, cover-up of bracelets worn for religious reasons that cannot be removed, adjustment to activity, etc.). The risk assessments should be written. All relevant staff should have the risk assessment and its findings shared with them.

2. All schools should follow the advice of the Association for Physical Education (AfPE) as follows:

    - The basic rule is that all jewellery should be removed as this then removes that particular hazard.

- The National guidance has always been that no jewellery should be worn in PE and that includes swimming and physical activity. It is not safe to cover ear-rings / studs / sleepers with tape. The reason is both because of the potential tearing of the ear lobe, but also the chance that the post of the ear-ring could damage the neck which is where the brachial nerve is running directly to the brain. There are anecdotal cases of children wearing ear-rings / studs with plasters over being hit by a ball or coming off worse in a collision and having nasty injuries as a consequence.

- Where an item of Jewellery cannot be removed then it is the adult teaching the group's responsibility to try to establish a safe situation to enable participation by considering how, or if, the context can be made safe by amending the task, conditioning the activity, or creating some other management strategy to make participation safe. Where safe participation cannot be assured then the pupil cannot take part in that element of the lesson.

- Low risk is where children can work and be secure in their own personal space. This could be warming up, skills practices, observing and analysing, officiating or coaching.

- Higher risk is where that personal space could be compromised, either by other participants or by equipment.
  This could be games activities where there are elements of 'scrimmage', gymnastics where children are close to each other or where the floor / equipment could come close to the ears, swimming, dodgeball, football etc.

- It is good practice to regularly ask if anyone is wearing body jewellery. If they disclose this, then the process of removal or considering whether safe participation can be made possible should apply.

- If there is no disclosure but some body piercing is seen during the session then from that point the process above needs to be applied – remove, make safe (in the event of bracelets worn for religious reasons that cannot be removed) or take no further participation in aspects of the session that would put the wearer or others at risk.

- Pupils should remove their own jewellery. This should be made clear to parents and carers. If the child is unable to do this themselves, they should not wear any. School policy should explain this to parents from the outset.

3. PE teachers should remind classes of this at the start of every lesson.

4. Parents should be reminded that the school has the higher-level duty of care and cannot be put in the situation of looking after their child without exercising that duty of care. It is dictated by national guidance, and they need to comply. Parental disclaimers are ineffective and legally unenforceable.