

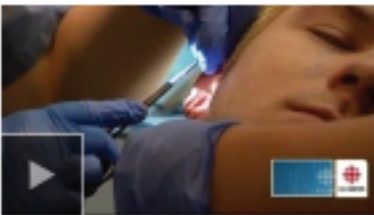
Regretful 20-somethings look to undo extreme piercings of youth

Gauging involves stretching the ear lobe and requires reconstructive surgery to reverse

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An earlobe before and after it was surgically repaired. (Dr. Kristina Zakhary Clinic)



Gauging regrets (Warning: graphic images) 2:49

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A body modification trend popular several years ago with teens and young adults is now putting a strain on the wallets of those looking to reverse it.

Gauging is when the earlobe is stretched — sometimes to huge proportions — to fit large pieces of jewellery.

But the trend seems to have fallen out of fashion, leaving many 20-somethings with big holes in both their ears and their pockets.

"I was 16, one of my friends got it and I thought it was really cool," said 24-year-old Zach Sigouin. "I find it unsightly now. I just lost complete interest in them and there's nothing I can do about it. I can't hide them."

Reconstructive surgery needed

Sigouin is one of many young people now seeking reconstructive surgery to undo gauging.

But only a few plastic surgeons specialize in earlobe reconstruction, a procedure that usually costs hundreds of dollars.

"The gaugers, they can look quite pretty," said Calgary cosmetic surgeon Dr. Kristina Zakhary.

"If you go into a field that requires a more conservative look then it might not fit your vocation."

The procedure is usually performed on an in-office basis. It takes only a few hours and uses local anaesthetic.

Sigouin said he's prepared to spend the money to restore his self-confidence.

"I think it's going to make a huge difference in my life and the way I feel," he said.