OBJECTIVE: To review the literature and discuss problems related to post-piercing breast abscesses.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Retrospective analysis of 10 case reports after Medline and internet search regarding breast abscess after nipple piercing. RESULTS: Nine case reports are published in Medline so far, the first in 1982, but eight within the last 3 years. One abstract of a case report presented at a meeting was found on the internet. Average patient age was 31.2 (15-60) years; 7 female and 3 male. Side of breast infection was 5 right, 4 left, and one both. The interval between piercing and treatment was on the average 20.8 (2-52) weeks, duration of symptoms 1 week to several months. Therapy in 9 patients was antibiotics and in 7 operation. The following major complications were seen: endocarditis, heart valve operation, prosthesis infection, metal foreign body in breast tissue, one reoperation because of recurrent infection, psychological stress because of primary diagnosis of breast cancer in 2 cases. CONCLUSION: The risks in nipple piercing are obviously under-documented and may be as high as 10-20% in the months after the procedure. Healing of the wound channel can take 6-12 months.