

Ear gauge piercing repair surgery quick, nearly painless

February 6 2014, by Nora Plunkett

At age 15, Cody Selga joined the wave of teenagers inserting gauges or plugs into their ears to stretch their earlobes.

"I liked the look of it, and a bunch of people in the bands I was involved with were doing it," Selga said.

While ear gauges have become increasingly common among young people in Western cultures, the practice dates back to ancient times. Ear [stretching](#) was a ritual used in part to signify tribal status in men and for decorative purposes in women.

The process starts by piercing the ears and gradually stretching them with increasingly larger gauges every two to three weeks. Selga stretched his ears to 1.5 inches in diameter. He reports that like many [young people](#), he increased the size of the gauges too quickly.

"If stretching is done too fast, it can result in pain, scarring and bleeding," said Rebecca Tung, MD, director of the Division of Dermatology, Loyola University Health System. "Also, the larger the holes, the harder they are to repair."

After graduating from art school and entering the workforce as a graphic designer, Selga decided he had outgrown the ear gauges. He turned to Loyola dermatologists for help. Doctors cut and reattached the loose flaps of skin on his ears during a two-hour outpatient procedure performed under local anesthesia.

"I recovered quickly with minimal pain and virtually no scarring," Selga said. "I am grateful to have my [ears](#) back to normal."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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