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## **The History of Earrings**

Earrings have adorned the ear lobes of men and women since at least 3000 B.C. In the Bible, stories about both Moses and Abraham mention earrings. Some walls of the ancient palace of Persepolis in Persia, dating from about 500 B.C., bear carved images showing soldiers wearing earrings.

Over the centuries, earrings have risen and fallen in popularity many times, depending on fashions, hair styles and economic resources. They've been regarded as symbols of social class, expressions of superstitions, religious amulets and even currency. In addition, ear jewelry has offered a creative outlet for imaginative designers and featured a limitless array of materials.

### **Ancient Styles & Meanings**

The earliest earring designs were hoops or pendants. In ancient Egypt, gold was the preferred material, while the Greeks used multicolored gemstones. The first earrings were attached through piercings in the ear lobe; ear piercing is one of the oldest known forms of body modification, which was done to symbolize age, status and wealth.

In primitive cultures, earrings were believed to keep evil spirits from entering the body through the ears. In addition to their protective power, earrings were thought to have curative effects. Pierced earrings were recommended to strengthen weak eyes; gold earrings set with emeralds were considered particularly effective. Gold ear jewelry has been worn by those seeking to cure headaches.

When ships began to sail the oceans, many sailors wore earrings, often gold hoops – the look remains vivid in today's pirate image. A very superstitious group, sailors purchased and wore gold earrings for several reasons: They meant a sailor had crossed the equator, or sailed around the world, or survived a shipwreck. Some sailors thought a pierced ear would help improve eyesight or hearing. And if they didn't survive a shipwreck, the gold ring in the ear would pay for a Christian burial wherever the body washed up.

Children as young as a few days old also wear earrings in some cultures. In parts of India, babies' ears are pierced in a religious ceremony and the wearing of earrings begins. In Southeast Asia, girls' ears are pierced in infancy, but males usually wait until young adulthood and undergo ear piercing as a rite of passage. In other societies, ear piercing is part of puberty rituals.

Earrings are featured as traditional gifts at festivals, weddings, childbirth and other rites of passage in India. Beautiful earrings are often passed from Indian mothers to daughters for several generations.

### **Women, Men & Earring Fashion**

Of course, the cosmetic and esthetic effects of earrings added to their appeal. Western women liked the way they enhanced the attractiveness of the face. In parts of Africa, heavy weights elongate women's ear lobes to achieve feminine beauty.

Both sexes wear earrings in most countries, but in the West the practice is sometimes deemed effeminate for men. While ear jewelry was common for European men at least through the Elizabethan era, the practice later declined and earrings became almost exclusively a feminine adornment.

But earrings became almost obsolete for women during the Middle Ages in Europe because they were overshadowed by gigantic hats, towering wigs and high collars. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, lower necklines and more subdued hairstyles brought earrings back in vogue, allowing jewelers and talented craftsmen to sell gold earrings to the upper classes, who could display their wealth in the jewelry they wore. But, at times during the next two centuries, face-hugging bonnets and sashes left no room for ear jewelry.

By 1900, they were back in style, and they haven't lost their popularity since. Shorter hair styles became popular after World War I, and jewelry designers created long, dangling jewelry for the ear. Clip-ons and screwback earrings were developed in the 1930s, and were considered more sanitary than the pierced version. The Art Deco period between the two world wars introduced a flurry of new designs featuring strong geometrical patterns in everything from jewelry to architecture that reflected influences of the Far and Middle East, Greece, Rome, Egypt and the cubist style in art.

Ear piercing returned to Western culture in the middle of the century. By the 1960s, ears were being pierced in jewelry stores, physicians' offices and teenage girls' parties. Around the same time, jewelers were selling gold earrings and earrings of other materials for daytime wear; previously they'd been largely reserved for evening.

Some men, especially in the gay and counterculture communities, began wearing earrings, usually a small stud or hoop, in the late 1960s. Sometimes a single earring, especially in the right lobe, was interpreted as a signal of homosexuality, though the symbol wasn't universally accepted. Quickly, the earring ceased to indicate membership in an "outsider" group, and became a more widely popular accessory.

### **Earrings Today**

By the 1970s, some people were wearing more than one set of earrings at a time, with multiple piercings, in all areas of the outer ear, not just the lobes. Styles and materials continued to multiply, reflecting the changes in cultural attitudes of the latter years of the 20th century.

Gold earrings have remained a staple of the woman's jewelry box, because they're versatile and can be worn with almost any color or clothing style, from casual to formal. Since ancient times, gold jewelry has been considered classic and essential to the wardrobe. Jewelers continue to sell gold earrings as gifts, basics and special pieces.

At Cash4Gold, where consumers can sell their jewelry for melt value, there's more educational information about gold jewelry, offered as part of the company's commitment to customer service. Visit [www.Cash4Gold.com](http://www.Cash4Gold.com) to learn more.