

BASIC PIERCING CARE

The purpose of cleaning a healing piercing is to remove any dead cells and discharge excreted by your body, as well as any external dirt and bacteria picked up during the day. You are not treating the wound with medicine or making it heal, but rather keeping the area clean while your body is healing itself. Basic hygiene and common sense, with particular attention to the specific area, are all that are required. You will be the best judge of what works for you. Pay attention to your body. It will tell you if you are doing something wrong. Listen to it.

New piercings should be cleaned once or twice daily, depending on your skin sensitivity, activities and environment. Continue cleaning every day for entire healing period. Bear in mind that over-cleaning or using too many products can also irritate your piercing. You wouldn't wash your hands three times in a row with different kinds of soap, so why do it to your piercing?

:: USE ONE OF THESE PRODUCTS::

LIQUID ANTIMICROBIAL / GERMICIDAL SOAP

These products not only kill germs but also remove residue build-up from smoking, cosmetics and natural healing discharge. Medicated products such as Provon and Satin Soap are most effective and least irritating, and are available from your piercer or pharmacy. Liquid tea tree oil soap (from a health food store) is a natural and cruelty-free alternative, check the label. Other possibilities include Almay Clearly Natural, Hypocare, NutriBiotic, and other mild fragrance and color-free antibacterial soaps. Keep in mind commercial antibacterial soaps may be less effective and more irritating, especially over time.

TO CLEAN THE PIERCING, first wash your hands with the above soap. Never touch your piercing with dirty hands! That is the easiest way to get an infection. Then let warm water run over your piercing for a minute, or do a presoak with warm or salt water to loosen dried discharge. This crusty discharge is a secreted lymph, blood plasma and dead cells, and is a normal part of a healing piercing. You can use a cotton swab to help remove it, but don't pick at it with dirty fingernails. Next, lather the piercing and surrounding area, making sure to remove any discharge on the jewelry. Once the jewelry is clean, soap it up and move it through the piercing several times so the lather is pulled all the way through the skin. Leave the cleanser to work for a minute or two, then rinse well, again moving the jewelry through the piercing while rinsing.

WARM SALT WATER ::

Warm salt water soaks can work wonders in healing piercings. They help draw out discharge, soothe irritations and may prevent infection. They also stimulate circulation which encourages speedy healing. You can use soaks for general healing, to remove dried discharge before cleaning or activity, and to treat minor infections and irritations. We strongly suggest soaking your piercing for several minutes at least once a day, more often if you are having trouble with healing. Quick one minute soaks can also provide a soothing bath between normal cleanings

Sea salt (non-iodized; available from health food stores and some grocery stores) works best as it is most pure. Most table salt contains extra chemicals (aluminum, magnesium, iodide, etc.) which can irritate and sting, and dextrose (sugar) which can cause yeast infections. Many non-iodized salts and kosher salts are natural sea salt. Read the label: if it contains only sodium chloride (salt) and maybe a form of calcium (-phosphate or -silicate to minimize clumping), it's good. Epsom salts are really too strong and are not meant for surface wound soaking. Don't use them.

To soak: Dissolve a pinch (1/4 teaspoon) of sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of hot water (distilled if possible), or 1/4 cup of sea salt in a hot bath (in a clean tub!). A stronger solution is not better and may actually be harmful to your piercing. Tip the glass and hold it over your piercing for 5-15 minutes (until water cools), pressing the glass against the skin to form a seal. For facial or ear piercings you can pour some of the mixture into a shot glass, medicine cup or similar small container. For nostrils try the clear plastic caps from squirt water bottles. With smaller cups, change the solution as it cools to be sure it is still working well. A less effective option is to saturate several cotton balls in the solution and pack them around the piercing. After soaking, rinse with clear water and pat dry with clean cloth or paper towels.

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:: THE FOLLOWING SHOULD NOT BE USED ::

DO NOT USE Rubbing Alcohol

Alcohol is far too harsh. It irritates and dries out the skin and can delay healing. It also burns and stings, and may not be as effective on germs (when used topically) as previously thought. Commercial witch hazel solutions containing alcohol should be avoided.

DO NOT USE Hydrogen Peroxide

Peroxide does kill many bacteria, but it also destroys the healthy skin around the piercing. Used long enough, it can eat away at the skin and actually keep your piercing from healing. Stay away from it!

DO NOT USE Antibiotic Ointments

These include such products as Neosporin, Bacitracin and triple antibiotic ointments. These do not work for more than two weeks, as your body becomes tolerant to the antibiotic in that time. This makes them worthless for healing piercings. They also have large amounts of petroleum jelly in them, which keeps oxygen out of the piercing and creates the perfect warm moist environment for bacteria to breed. The greasy barrier also keeps water and cleaning solutions from effectively reaching your piercing, making it impossible to clean. Read the label: "Do not use on puncture wounds."

DO NOT USE Betadine (Povidone Iodine)/Hibiclens

These solutions may be used for first aid or surgical wound care, but for long term care they are actually too strong and may delay healing. Betadine may be useful to clear up an infection, but when used too often it can actually kill healthy skin cells. It will also discolor gold jewelry. Many people also develop sensitivity to these solutions over time. For everyday cleaning, try one of the milder solutions mentioned above.

DO NOT USE Benzylkonium Chloride (Pierced Ear Solution)

While sometimes used in the past, Benzylkonium Chloride has proven to be problematic for many people. It is not as effective a cleanser as antimicrobial soaps and does not penetrate or remove oil and discharge in the piercing. Most BZK products have a very short shelf life of a month or less. Additionally, there has been some confusion over ingredients and it seems some manufacturers may be using formulas which are not compatible with human tissue. If you need a quick rinse on the go, try individually wrapped saline pads instead (from the pharmacy first aid aisle).

HEALING TIMES

The following are approximate healing times for well-cared-for piercings for most people. Keep in mind that your piercing may heal more quickly or take even longer. If you pay attention to what your body is doing, you will know when your piercing is healed. At the end of the healing time, cleaning twice daily is no longer required, although cleaning once daily is still recommended. At this point, jewelry can safely be changed, but should not be left out of any piercing during the first year. Even once the hole becomes permanent, it can still shrink and make jewelry reinsertion difficult. As a general rule, if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in it. Scroll down for more...

:: Facial Piercings ::

Earlobes :: 6-8 weeks
Ear Cartilage :: 2-4 months

Eyebrow :: 6-8 weeks
Nostril :: 6 months-1 year

Septum :: 6-8 weeks
Bridge :: 8-10 weeks

Tongue :: 4-6 weeks
Lip/Labret :: 8-10 weeks

Beauty Mark :: 8-10 weeks
Cheek :: 10-12 weeks

:: Nipples & Navels ::

Female Nipples :: 4-6 months
Male Nipples :: 2-4 months

Navels :: 6 months

:: Female Genital Piercings ::

Inner Labia :: 2-4 weeks
Outer Labia :: 2-6 months

Clitoral Hood :: 2-6 weeks
Fourchette :: 4-6 weeks

Triangle :: 8-10 weeks
Clitoris :: 2-4 weeks

:: Male Genital Piercings ::

Prince Albert :: 4-9 weeks
Reverse PA :: 4-6 months

Frenum :: 6-8 weeks
Scrotum :: 6-10 weeks

Guiche :: 8-10 weeks
Dydoe :: 8-12 weeks

Ampallang :: 4-8 months
Apadravya :: 4-8 months

STAY HEALTHY

The healthier your lifestyle, the more quickly you can heal. This includes eating well, easing stress and getting enough sleep. A good multivitamin, especially one containing zinc and vitamin C, can help your body rebuild itself. Avoid getting pierced while you are sick, as your immune system is already strained and healing will be harder. Also, avoid getting pierced while pregnant; your body's energies are focused elsewhere. Reduce smoking and avoid recreational drug use.

KEEP HANDS OFF

Dirty fingers are an excellent way to get a piercing infected. Wash your hands with an antibacterial soap before handling your piercing or jewelry. Contrary to popular rumor, dirty rings do not need to be turned through all day. This only pulls germs into the hole. Unless you are cleaning your piercing, keep your hands off!

CHECK JEWELRY

Any jewelry with screw-on balls, discs, etc. should be checked occasionally to make sure the ends are on tight (especially tongues, labrets and navels).

DO NOT CONSTRICT YOUR PIERCINGS

Your piercing will not heal properly if the jewelry is held in an unnatural position. Therefore, avoid wearing tight clothing over a healing piercing. This is especially true of navel piercings. For these, the waistline of the clothing must be low enough that it will not hit the piercing when you stand, bend over or sit down. Beware of large belts, stockings and body suits, sit up straight, and do not sleep on your stomach. Remember that once the ring begins to heal crooked, it will not go straight again.

Bras may be problematic for some women healing nipple piercings. If your rings are being twisted under or are getting irritated, try cotton tank tops or sports bras instead. Or fold a clean piece of cotton gauze or paper towel into a pad and place it inside your bra, under the bottom part of the ring (so the ring is supported parallel to the body).

AVOID ORAL CONTACT

Mouths harbor lots of bacteria and germs. Putting them on your piercing is one of the fastest ways to get an infection. Avoid unprotected oral sex while healing genital piercings, especially in the first two weeks. Keep others' mouths off tasty ear piercings, navels and nipples until healed, and avoid wet kissing with fresh oral piercings. Don't share drinks, forks, etc.

AVOID OTHER PEOPLE'S BODILY FLUIDS

Remember, this is an open wound and should be treated accordingly. Even if you are monogamous, you and your partner have different bacteria and can give each other infections. And if you aren't monogamous, you could be sharing more than just the moment. Pay close attention with new oral and genital piercings.

KEEP MAKE-UP AND HAIR PRODUCTS AWAY

Dirty hair should be kept off fresh ear and facial piercings. Clean piercings after applying hair products and make-up, as they contain irritants and may harbor bacteria. Also consider that telephones and eyeglasses can come into contact facial and ear piercings. Wipe them down with antiseptic and keep them away from piercings.

CUT DOWN ON SMOKING

Not just for oral piercings, but also for facial piercings. Besides leaving smoke residue in your piercings, smoking can increase risks and lengthen healing time. They don't call it a "dirty little habit" for nothing. Cut down or quit if possible.

WEAR NATURAL FIBERS

Natural fibers (cotton, silk, etc.) allow your piercing to breathe; synthetics do not. Piercings that are continually "sweaty" may be slower to heal. Be particularly aware of bras (padding!) on nipple piercings and undergarments over genital piercings.

WEAR CLEAN CLOTHES

The clothes over a fresh piercing can harbor bacteria and other infectious matter. Make sure your sheets and bedding are clean as well.

KEEP PETS AWAY FROM FRESH PIERCINGS

Fluffy may be cute, but she also sheds and walks around in her litterbox, and who knows where Spot's mouth has been? This also means keeping pets out of your bed during healing.

BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU SWIM

Sea salt and chlorine may accelerate healing, but the bacteria and pollution in water do not. If possible, avoid swimming for the first few weeks of a new piercing, and always clean your piercing when you get out of the water (EarCare or saline comes in handy here). Public pools, lakes and hot tubs are especially nasty germ breeding zones. If you must swim during healing, consider using a water-tight wound covering such as Tegaderm or Clean Seals, available at your pharmacy.

USE COMMON SENSE

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for your healing. **PAY ATTENTION** to your body. It will tell you if you are doing something wrong. **LISTEN** to it.

We hope this information proves helpful for you. Remember that we are neither doctors nor miracle workers. We promise that you will leave our shop with a clean, beautiful piercing. We give these suggestions based on our experience and research in our field. What you do from here on is up to you. You must be responsive to and responsible for your body. We are here to help. If at any point you have any problems or questions, please feel free to stop in or give us a call. Enjoy!

Suggested Tattoo Aftercare

Your tattoo should be easy to heal. The tattooing process creates a wound very similar to a scrape. Do not pick or scratch at the tattoo. Typically tattoos require 10-14 days to fully heal.

For the first 1 to 12 hours:

Keep the protective covering over your tattoo. This protective covering will prevent bacteria or clothing from coming in contact with your tattoo.

After 1 to 12 hours:

Remove the bandage with clean hands and gently wash the tattoo with warm/hot water and a mild soap. We do not suggest using a wash cloth. Wash clothes are too harsh and may distort your new tattoo. Next, gently pat the tattoo dry.

For the first seven days:

Keep your tattoo clean with a mild soap and warm/hot water. Do not soak your tattoo. When showering wash thoroughly. Try to avoid long exposures with water. Your new tattoo may become splotchy if over-cleaned. We suggest not using ointments or creams at this time. **NO** hot-tubs or baths.