

Piercing Aftercare

There is no “ONE WAY” to care for a piercing. It varies based on an individual’s body type and the way in which their body heals. In addition, lifestyle is equally impactful on healing a piercing. So we suggest taking your multi-vitamin (if you take one), eating healthy (your fruits and veggies) and getting a good night’s sleep (6-8hrs)!

It is extremely important to follow the aftercare instruction your piercer has given you. ALWAYS consult with your piercer prior to changing instructions or trying something different that you’ve read on the internet or heard from a family/friend/another piercer/etc. Your piercer is a professional who knows what you are going through, and how to help you if needed. If you have questions or concerns, contact us immediately! Waiting even just a day or two can make a big difference!

What is NORMAL for a piercing?

- **In the first few days:** It is not uncommon to experience some bleeding, bruising, discoloration, localized swelling, or tenderness.
- **While you’re healing:** You may experience itching, soreness, and secretion of a whitish-yellow fluid (not pus) that often forms a crust on or around the jewelry. This fluid is indicative of the healing process functioning properly, and is perfectly normal. Tissue around the jewelry may tighten as it heals. Do not twist, turn, move back and forth or force your jewelry to move. Most piercings appear healed before the healing process is complete. The reason is because tissue heals from the outside in. Even though the piercing feels okay, the interior remains delicate as it continues to heal. So being persistent and continuing with the suggested cleaning routine during the entire heal time will provide a happy and healthy piercing.
- **After you’re healed:** The jewelry may feel tight and might not move freely in the piercing; DO NOT force it. If you do not incorporate a daily cleaning routine for your piercing, normal but unpleasant smelly bodily secretions can accumulate. These secretions are a semi-solid white substance from the oil glands called sebum. Sebum is a natural oil our body produces, however when mixed with dead skin cells and bacteria can create a “funky” smell, but daily cleaning can reduce or even eliminate the sebum build up and unpleasant smell. In addition, healed piercings can shrink or close quickly (in minutes) after having been there for years! However this does vary, as everyone is different, so if you like your piercing, keep the jewelry in. Leaving jewelry out of a healed piercing can result in losing the piercing entirely no matter how long ago you were pierced!

What cleaning solutions to use:

- A mild, un-scented liquid soap that is preferably anti-microbial, anti-bacterial or germicidal. We suggest using Tattoo Goo Soap or Liquid Dial Gold.
- A packaged saline solution without additives, such as H2Ocean piercing spray or Simply Saline Wound Wash. You can prepare your own saline solution (Sea Salt Soak) by doing the following; Take 8oz of DISTILLED WATER (not tap, not spring) and add 1/4tsp of non-iodized (iodine-

free) sea salt and gently warm allowing the salt to dissolve. More is not better. A stronger mixture/solution will irritate the piercing, delaying healing.

- A Chamomile Tea and Sea Salt Soak that you prepare at home. Take 8oz of DISTILLED WATER (not tap, not spring) and 1/4tsp of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt and place in a clean sauce pan and bring to a slight boil. Stir until the salt is dissolved, then remove from heat, place Chamomile Tea bag into water and allow to steep (remain in water) for 5 to 10min. Check temperature of mixture prior to use. You want it to be warm but NOT hot.
- A packaged alcohol-free antiseptic mouth rinse without additives, such as H2Ocean Mouthwash, Listerine ZERO or Biotene Dry Mouth. You can also use the above mentioned method of making your own saline solution as a one-time use mouth rinse.

How to clean most piercings:

- WASH your hands thoroughly before cleaning or touching your piercing. Touch the piercing ONLY while cleaning it, avoid touching it the rest of the time. Do not twist, turn, move the jewelry back and forth or force it around in the piercing.
- WASH your piercing with soap just once daily unless your piercing has gotten dirty. While soap kills germs and bacteria, it will also kill some of the good stuff that aids in the healing process. So washing too much can actually make the piercing take longer to heal. Lather up a pea size drop of soap to clean the jewelry and the piercing. Use your fingers or a cotton swab to gently clean the piercing. Do not use a washcloth or loofah on your piercing. They contain bacteria, and can catch on the jewelry causing trauma to the piercing. Do not leave the soap in contact with the piercing for longer than thirty seconds. Rinse well with warm clean water to remove all traces of soap from the piercing. If cleaning while in the shower, wash the piercing AFTER washing everything else. Make it the LAST thing you wash before exiting your shower.
- SOAK your piercing for five to ten minutes once or twice daily. Do this by inverting a cup of warm saline solution over the piercing to form a vacuum. For certain piercings it may be easier to apply solution using gentle pressure and a clean gauze, cotton swab or a clean paper towel piece soaked with the saline solution. Briefly rinse afterward with clean warm water to remove any residue.
- DRY by carefully and gently patting the piercing with a clean disposable paper product. Towels and cloth contain bacteria, and can catch on the jewelry causing trauma to the piercing.

How to clean oral piercings:

- GENTLY rinse out your mouth 4-5 times daily for 30-60 seconds in the morning, after meals, after smoking, and before going to bed throughout the entire healing process of the piercing. More is not better. A stronger mixture/solution will irritate the piercing, delaying healing. In addition, over cleaning can cause discoloration or irritation of your mouth and piercing, which

may also prolong healing. Use or overuse of Listerine products will often delay healing and discolor your tongue blue/green.

Surface Anchor (micro-dermal) piercings:

Surface anchor implants are different from basic body piercings and as a result require different aftercare. Healing times can vary from 6 months to a year to heal. Do not attempt to change the jewelry top before your piercing is completely healed.

- **Protecting your surface anchor:** For the first 48-72 hours wear a firmly placed dressing to stop any deviation of the jewelry. Cover your jewelry with a fresh waterproof bandage before going to bed. Choose a bandage that forms a tight seal all the way around the piercing. Small waterproof Band-Aids work well. Upon waking up, carefully remove the covering and gently clean your piercing. Do not wear the bandage throughout the day unless you are participating in an activity where the dermal may be in danger or if you are in a dirty environment. Air circulation is extremely important in the healing process!
- **Cleaning solutions to use:** Use a mild, un-scented liquid soap, preferably anti-microbial, anti-bacterial or germicidal, a packaged sterile saline spray with no additives or you can prepare your own saline solution. To make your own, take 8oz of DISTILLED WATER (not tap, not spring) and add 1/4tsp of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt and gently warm allowing the salt to dissolve. More is not better. A stronger mixture/solution will irritate the piercing, delaying healing.
- **Cleaning instructions:** While showering, lather a pea-sized amount of soap in the palm of your hand with warm water. Gently massage the lather around the jewelry and allow it to remain on your skin for no longer than one minute. Do not use a washcloth or loofah on your piercing. They contain bacteria, and can catch on the jewelry causing trauma or removing the surface anchor all together! Rinse well with warm clean water to remove all traces of soap from the piercing. Wash the piercing AFTER washing everything else. Make it the LAST thing you wash before exiting your shower.
- **Saline soaking:** Spray the saline solution directly on your piercing. Then, saturate a gauze pad or paper towel and press it firmly on the area for about five minutes. Rinse well with warm clean water to remove residue from the area. DRY by carefully and gently patting the piercing with a clean disposable paper product. Towels and cloth contain bacteria, and can catch on the jewelry causing trauma to the piercing.
- **Our Suggestion:** Saline soaking is still recommended for this piercing, however depending on placement can be difficult to achieve, and pocketing of fluid can occur, potentially causing problems. You can use Saline Spray over Sea Salt Soaks for surface (micro-dermal) anchors. Saline spray should be used at least twice daily. It is common for crust to collect under the disc/gem of the surface anchor. This can be difficult to remove if you cannot see the surface anchor. If you are having issues cleaning your piercing stop by the shop and we will help you. A great way to remove crusts/exudate is to use dental floss after a shower or after applying your saline spray. Gently slide the floss underneath the top, use a slow saw motion to loosen crust, and rinse with water or saline. If area is crusted heavily you may need to soak for a little longer.

Do's and Don'ts To assist with healing:

What TO do:

- FOLLOW the aftercare instructions you were given every day EVEN when you don't want to. It is by far THE BEST WAY towards a healthy piercing!
- WASH your hands with an anti-bacterial soap prior to touching the piercing; leave it alone except during cleaning. While your piercing is healing, it is not necessary to rotate your jewelry.
- CHECK the threaded ends of your jewelry daily! Remember; Do not touch without washing your hands first!
- KEEP your sheets and towels washed and changed weekly.
- STAY HEALTHY; the healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal. Get enough sleep and eat a nutritious diet. Exercise during healing is fine; just listen to your body. If you notice irritation or discomfort, than stop.
- CONTACT your piercer with any questions or concerns you have PRIOR to making any changes with your aftercare or doing anything with your piercing.

What NOT TO do:

- DO NOT over-clean. This can delay your healing and irritate your piercing.
- DO NOT welcome undue trauma such as excessive motion of the area, playing with the jewelry, friction from tight/restrictive clothing, and forceful cleaning. These activities can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration, prolonged healing, as well as a list of other complications.
- DO NOT engage in contact with others' bodily fluids, including oral contact, on or near your piercing while it's healing. This means during the ENTIRE duration of your healing process.
- DO NOT stress! Stress only puts the body's healing ability in reverse!
- DO NOT indulge in too much caffeine, use recreational drug, or drink too much alcohol.
- DO NOT put a healing piercing in an ocean, lake, pool, hot tub, jello pit etc. YOU CAN protect your piercing by using a waterproof bandage, such as Tegaderm or Clean Seals, which can be purchased from any drug store.
- DO NOT place beauty and personal care products on or around the piercing, including cosmetics, concealers, powders, lotions, sprays, etc.

- DO NOT hang charms or objects from your jewelry until the piercing is fully healed.
- DO NOT clean with betadine, rubbing alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide. These products are harsh, cause drying of healthy tissue and can cause an interruption to the healing piercing and irritation of surrounding skin!
- DO NOT use ointments, such as Neosporin or Betadine. They don't let your piercing get the air circulation it needs to assist the healing process. They also can contain ingredients that are not safe for long-term use.
- DO NOT use Bactine, pierced ear care solutions, and other products containing Benzalkonium Chloride (BZK). It tends to be irritating to a healing piercing and should definitely not be used for long-term care.
- DO NOT remove the jewelry if you feel the piercing may be infected! Often it's irritated and not infected (they can look very similar). If it is infected, leaving the jewelry in will aid in the draining of the infection out!

Tips to aid specific areas:

- **NAVEL:** A hard vented eye patch can be worn under clothing to protect the piercing from restrictive clothing and trauma from physical activities such as sports.
- **EAR AND FACE:** Clean cell phones, headphones, eyeglasses, hats and really anything that comes in contact with the area close to the piercing.
- **NIPPLES:** A sports bra or other tight fitting tank/tee might be more comfortable to wear and may provide protection from rubbing irritations.
- **GENITAL:** ALWAYS use protection such as condoms or oral dams to avoid contact with a partner's bodily fluid. Wash hands prior to touching anywhere near the piercing. DO NOT use saliva as a lubricant, it's not one. After sexual activity, clean and soak the piercing. Engage in sexual activity when it feels right. Be gentle around the piercing and avoid rough play until the piercing is healed. You know your body best. If there is discomfort or pain with the piercing, STOP.

Problems? Tips for swelling and bumps:

Having a difficult with the healing of your piercing? Often people complain about bumps that form on or around their piercing. While proper care usually keeps these from forming, sometimes a piercing gets a bump even with the best of care. The Good News is identifying the problem and treating it correctly will reduce pain, help the piercing heal faster, and assist in getting bumps to go away. The majority of troublesome piercings can be resolved without losing the piercing.

Keep your cleaning regiment simple and consistent. Constantly changing your aftercare and /or doing many types of regiments at once will generally not help make things better and usually makes things worse!

- Basic Advice for Healing; If you are rotating, moving, or touching your jewelry throughout the day STOP!! Do not squeeze, try to pop a bump, or pick at your piercing. Do not use alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, or ointment on your piercing. If you have long hair, keep it pulled back away from the area. Don't put makeup, perfume, or lotions on or around a healing piercing. To help avoid bumps/swelling around piercings, ESPECIALLY in regards to cartilage piercings and nostril piercings, applying slight pressure to around the piercing with cotton swabs and the Sea Salt soak for 3-5min. Avoid trauma such as friction from tight clothing or objects rubbing against the area.
- Using Sea Salt Soaks; Soaks are one of the best things you can do for a new or irritated piercing. If you do NOTHING ELSE at least do sea salt soaks daily! You can easily make by dissolving 1/4 teaspoon of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of warm distilled or bottled water. Soak for five-ten minutes once or twice per day. Invert a cup of warm saline solution over the area to form a vacuum. For certain piercings it may be easier to use a warm compress saturated with saline with disposable paper towels. Briefly rinse afterward with clean warm water to remove any residue and pat dry with a clean paper towel. Always gently warm solution after removing from refrigerator before use. Using this mixture cold will be much less beneficial. Our bodies (much like ourselves) are much more productive and hardworking when warm!
- Over the counter anti-inflammatories can be taken as long as you have no allergies or adverse reactions to them. They help decrease swelling and provide some relief from discomfort you may feel. Holistically fresh ground ginger root will provide some of the same anti-inflammatory effects!
- Chamomile Tea Sea Salt Soaks. This can be done in addition to or instead of plain Sea Salt soaks. Chamomile's active ingredient is bisabolol, which contains anti-inflammatory, anti-irritant, anti-allergenic and anti-bacterial properties. Helps in reducing bumps (hypertrophic scarring) around piercings areas, or calming irritated and inflamed piercings. Take 8oz of DISTILLED WATER (not tap, not spring) and 1/4tsp of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt and place in a clean sauce pan and bring to a slight boil. Stir until the salt is dissolved, remove from heat and allow the Chamomile Tea to steep (remain in water) for 5 to 10min. Do NOT use until cooled enough to be warm to touch. Place enough of mixture that will completely cover piercing into a cup and invert over the area to form a vacuum. For certain piercings it may be easier to apply using clean gauze, cotton swabs or clean paper towel pieces saturated with Chamomile solution. Apply gentle and steady pressure to the bump for 3-5 min. DO NOT push firmly or try to squeeze/pop the bump. Briefly rinse afterward with clean warm water to remove

any residue and pat dry with a clean paper towel. Solution can be stored covered/sealed in a container in the refrigerator for up to 3days AS LONG AS you don't "double dip" a paper towel/gauze/cotton swab you are using to clean your piercing in the solution AND nothing else contaminates the solution. Always gently warm solution after removing from refrigerator before use. Using this mixture cold will be much less beneficial.

- If you think your piercing is becoming infected, DO NOT remove your jewelry. Leaving the piercing in during a potential infection will allow the infection to drain out. Removing the piercing can cause the skin to close and the infection to get trapped under the skin. If you are concerned about an infection contact your piercer.
- With oral piercings, allowing small pieces of ice to dissolve in the mouth around the piercing can help alleviate discomfort and swelling. Use only ice cubes made with clean filtered water, and be sure to rinse with an aftercare solution immediately after.

IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS THAT ARE NOT ADDRESSED HERE, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR PIERCER OR A LICENSED PHYSICIAN. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THINGS ON YOUR OWN. WE'RE HERE TO HELP!