

# Piercing Aftercare

## Cleaning Solutions:

- Packaged .9% sterile saline solution with no additives (read the label!)
- Anti-microbial or antibacterial alcohol-free mouth rinse (for oral piercing)

## Cleaning Instructions for Body Piercings:

1. WASH your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching on or near your piercing for any reason.

1. SALINE soak once daily. Spray your sterile saline solution onto a piece of gauze or a paper towel until it is thoroughly wet. Hold this wet compress onto or around the piercing for 5 minutes. The longer you soak, the better. A brief rinse will remove any residue.

1. Do not use Soap or body wash directly on a piercing until it is well healed.

1. DRY with disposable paper products such as gauze or tissues, because cloth towels can harbor bacteria and catch on new piercings causing injury. Pat gently to avoid trauma.

## Cleaning Instructions for Oral Piercings:

Rinse mouth 4-5 times daily with cleaning solution for 30-60 seconds after meals and at bedtime during the entire healing period. If you over clean, it may cause discoloration or irritation of tongue.

## **What Is Normal:**

Initially: Some bleeding, localized swelling, tenderness, or bruising is common.

During healing: Some discoloration, itching, secretion of a whitish-yellow fluid (plasma, not pus) that will form some crust on the jewelry. The tissue may tighten around the jewelry as it heals.

Once healed: The jewelry may not move freely in the piercing; DO NOT force it. If you fail to include cleaning your piercing as a part of your daily hygiene routine, normal but smelly bodily secretions may accumulate. A piercing may seem healed before healing is complete. This is because piercings heal from the outside in, and although it feels healed the tissue remains fragile on the inside.

## **What to Do:**

Wash your hands prior to touching the piercing; leave it alone except when cleaning. It is not necessary to rotate the jewelry while healing. Stay healthy, get enough sleep, and eat a nutritious diet. The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal. Exercise during healing is fine, just "listen" to your body. Make sure your bedding is kept clean and changed regularly. Wear clean, comfortable, breathable clothing that protects your piercing while sleeping. Showering is safer than taking a bath because bathtubs tend to harbor bacteria.

For Oral Piercing: To help reduce swelling after getting pierced, allow small pieces of ice to dissolve in the mouth for about 30-60 minutes. You can also take an over the counter, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen according to package instructions. Sleep with your head elevated above your heart during the first few nights. Use a new soft-bristled toothbrush and keep it clean. Brush your teeth and use your chosen rinse (saline or mouthwash) after every meal. During healing floss daily, and gently brush your teeth, tongue, and jewelry. Once healed, brush the jewelry more thoroughly to avoid plaque buildup. Stay healthy, the healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal. Get enough sleep and eat a nutritious diet.

Eating: Slowly eat small bites of food, placed directly onto the molars. Avoid eating spicy, salty, acidic, or hot temperature foods or beverages for a few days. Cold foods and beverage are soothing and help reduce swelling. For tongue piercing, try to keep your tongue level in your mouth as you chew and swallow. For labret (cheek and lip) piercings, be cautious about opening your mouth too wide as this can result in the backing of the jewelry catching on the teeth.

### **What to Avoid:**

#### **DO NOT TOUCH THE PIERCING AREA OR JEWELRY**

Avoid undue trauma such as friction from clothing, excessive motion of the area, playing with the jewelry, and vigorous cleaning. These activities can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration, prolonged healing, and other complications. Avoid the use of alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, Betadine, Hibiclens or ointment. Avoid over-cleaning. This can delay your healing and irritate your piercing. Avoid all oral contact, rough play, and contact with others' bodily fluids on or near your piercing during healing. Avoid stress and recreational drug use including excessive caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. Avoid submerging the piercing in bodies of water such as lakes, pools, Jacuzzis, etc. Or protect your piercing using a special waterproof bandage such as Tegaderm, which is available at drug-stores. Avoid all beauty and personal care products on or around the piercing including cosmetics, lotions, and sprays, etc. Don't hang charms or any object from your jewelry until the piercing is fully healed.

#### Extra concerns for oral piercing: **DO NOT PLAY WITH THE JEWELRY.**

Long-term effects of playing with and clicking the jewelry against the teeth can result in permanent damage to teeth and other oral structures. Avoid any mouthwash containing alcohol. It can irritate the area and delay healing. Avoid chewing on gum.

## Hints and Tips:

Unless there is a problem with the size, style, or material of the initial jewelry, leave it in place for the entire healing period. A qualified piercer should perform any necessary jewelry change during healing. Contact your piercer if your jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure). There are non-metallic jewelry alternatives.

With clean hands or paper products, be sure to regularly check threaded ends on your jewelry for tightness ("Righty-tighty, lefty-loosey"). Should you decide you no longer want the piercing, seek professional help in the removal of the jewelry and continue cleaning the piercing until the hole closes. In most cases, only a small indentation will remain. Once the swelling has subsided and the piercing is healed enough, the initial jewelry should be changed to a smaller one that fits tighter to the piercing.

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## For Particular Areas:

**Navel:** A hard, vented eye patch (sold at pharmacies) can be applied under tight clothing (such as nylon stockings) or secured using a length of ace bandage around the body (to avoid irritation from adhesive). This can protect the area from restrictive clothing, excess irritation, and impact during physical activities such as contact sports.

**Ear/Ear Cartilage and Facial:** Use the t-shirt trick, dress your pillow in a large, clean t-shirt and turn it nightly; one clean t-shirt provides four clean surfaces for sleeping. Maintain cleanliness of telephones, headphones, eyeglasses, helmets, hats, and anything that contacts the pierced area. Use caution when styling your hair and advise your stylist of a new or healing piercing. Do not sleep on the piercing. The weight of your head will make the piercing sore and prolong healing and increase the chance for complications.

**Nipple:** While it's healthy for the piercing to be exposed to some air in order to "breathe", the support of a tight cotton shirt or sports bra may provide protection and feel comfortable, especially for sleeping or exercise.

**Genital:** In most cases, you can engage activity as soon as you feel ready. Comfort and hygiene are vital. During healing, all sexual activities must be gentle. To increase comfort and decrease trauma, soak in warm saline solution or plain water to remove any crusty matter prior to sexual activity. Use barriers such as condoms, dental dams, and Tegaderm, etc. to avoid contact with a partner's bodily fluids, even in long-term relationships. Use clean, disposable barriers on sex toys. Wash hands before touching on or near the piercing.

Use a new container of water-based lubricant. Do not use your own saliva as a lubricant. After sex, an additional saline soak or clean water rinse is suggested, Prince Albert and Apadravya piercings can bleed freely for the first few days. If using soap, urinate after cleaning any piercing that is near the urethra. Each body is unique and healing times vary considerably. If you have any questions, please contact your piercer.

Each body is unique and healing times vary considerably. Continue the piercing after care until there is no longer any swelling, discoloration, seeping, or flaking skin. If you have any questions or problems, please contact your piercer!