

- Wash your hands before touching (directly or near-by) a healing piercing.
- In most cases you can engage in sexual activity as soon as you feel ready, but maintaining hygiene and avoiding trauma are vital; all sexual activities should be gentle during the healing period.
- Use barriers such as condoms, dental dams, and waterproof bandages, etc. to avoid contact with your partners' body fluids, even in long-term monogamous relationships.
- Use protection on sex toys, too.
- Use a new container of water-based lubricant; do not use saliva.
- Showering after intercourse is suggested.

ALTERNATIVE AFTERCARE

Aftercare is an evolving conversation in the progression of body piercing. Aftercare needs can differ from one region and climate to another and not all products are widely available, discuss your specific needs with your body piercer.

- If you choose to use soap on a healing piercing consider using a gentle soap free from harsh chemicals, dyes, and perfumes. The use of an antibacterial soap is not suggested as it may over-dry and irritate your piercing. If your piercer suggests the use of a soap, be sure to fully rinse away the product after use.
- If sterile saline is not available in your region, focus on keeping the piercing clean by rinsing well during regular showering. Check in with a local piercer for additional regional aftercare suggestions.

Your _____ piercing

is expected to take _____ or longer to heal.

Piercer: _____

Jewelry: _____

Earliest Change/Downsize Date: _____

For any additional information contact your piercer.

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*Disclaimer: These guidelines are based on a combination of vast professional experience, common sense, research, and extensive clinical practice. This is not to be considered a substitute for medical advice from a doctor. If you suspect an infection, seek medical attention. Be aware that many doctors have not received specific training regarding piercing. Your local piercer may be able to refer you to a piercing-friendly medical professional. For more information, see the APP Brochure Troubleshooting For You and Your Healthcare Professional.

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2023 Edition



SUGGESTED AFTERCARE GUIDELINES FOR BODY PIERCINGS



CLEANING SOLUTIONS

• Mixing your own sea salt solution is no longer a suggested practice from the APP. Mixing your own sea salt solution will commonly result in the product being far too salty and strong, this can over dry the piercing and interfere with healing. We strongly encourage you to use a sterile saline, labeled for use as a wound wash. Your saline ingredients should list .09% sodium chloride as the only ingredient (sometimes purified water will be listed). Additives like moisturizers and antibacterials should be avoided, as well as similar sounding products like contact lens saline, nasal spray, or eye drops.

CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS FOR BODY PIERCINGS

- **WASH** your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- **SPRAY** with sterile saline wound wash while healing. Moving or rotating jewelry is not necessary during cleaning/rinsing and may actually irritate the piercing.
- **DRY** with clean, disposable products like gauze or cotton swabs, gently removing any crusty debris or build up. Cloth towels should be avoided as they can harbor bacteria and snag on jewelry.

WHAT IS NORMAL?

- **Initially:** some bleeding, localized swelling, tenderness, and/or bruising.
- **During healing:** some discoloration, itching, secretion of a whitish-yellow fluid that will form some crust on the jewelry. The tissue may tighten around the jewelry as it heals.

A piercing might seem healed before the healing process is complete. This is because this type of wound heals from the outside to the inside. Although it may feel fine on the outside, the interior could still be fragile. Be patient, and keep cleaning throughout the entire initial healing period.

- **Once healed:** the jewelry may not move freely in the piercing; do not force it. Cleaning your piercings as part of your normal hygiene routine can help them stay clean and avoid having normal, possibly smelly, secretions accumulate.
- **Tip:** Piercings, even healed ones, can shrink or close in minutes, even after having been there for years! This varies from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in - do not leave the hole empty.

WHAT TO DO

- Wash your hands prior to touching the piercing; leave the piercing alone except when cleaning. During healing, do not twist, spin, or rotate your jewelry.
- Exercise and sweating during healing is fine. Avoid activities that could jostle or aggravate the piercing. Keep the piercing protected from bacteria present on gym equipment or exercise mats.
- Make sure your bedding is washed and changed regularly. Wear clean, comfortable, breathable clothing that protects your piercing while you

are sleeping.

- Showers tend to be safer than taking baths, as bathtubs can harbor bacteria. If you bathe in a tub, clean it well before each use and rinse off your piercing when you get out.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Avoid cleaning with alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, antibacterial soaps, iodine, or any harsh products, as these can damage cells. Also avoid ointments as they prevent necessary air circulation.
- Avoid Bactine®, pierced ear care solutions, and other products containing Benzalkonium Chloride (BZK). These can be irritating and are not intended for long-term wound care.
- Avoid over-cleaning. This can delay your healing and irritate your piercing.
- Avoid undue trauma such as friction and pressure 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 all oral contact, rough play, and contact with others' bodily fluids on or near your piercing during healing.
- Avoiding things like excessive stress, drug use, excessive caffeine, nicotine and alcohol are suggested as they can prolong the healing process.
- Avoid submerging the piercing in bodies of water such as lakes, pools, oceans, hot tubs, etc. Or, protect your piercing using a waterproof transparent film dressing. These are available at most pharmacies and are ideal for nipple, navel, and surface piercing placements.
- 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.

HINTS AND TIPS JEWELRY:

- Unless there is a problem with the size, style, or material of the initial jewelry, leave it in place for the entire healing process. Many piercings require a downsize before the piercing is healed. See a qualified piercer to perform downsizes or any jewelry changes during healing. Visit our member locator to find an APP member near you, or to request a copy of our Picking Your Piercer brochure.

¹"Nutrition Guidelines to Improve Wound Healing" Cleveland Clinic 2008. 4 Jan. 2013 http://my.clevelandclinic.org/healthy_living/nutrition/hic_nutrition_guidelines_to_improve_wound_healing.aspx 2 "The ubiquitous triclosan." Pesticides and You 24.3 Glaser, Aviva (2004): 12-17.

- Leave jewelry in at all times. Even well-healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes! If removed, reinsertion can be difficult or impossible. Contact your piercer for a non-metallic jewelry alternative if your metal jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure).

- With clean hands or paper products, be sure to regularly check threaded and threadless ends on your jewelry for tightness.
- Should you decide you no longer want the piercing, simply remove the jewelry (or have a professional piercer remove it for you) and continue cleaning the piercing until the hole closes. Body piercings create a permanent change to the body, while most scarring is minimal, piercings will leave scars in their absence.
- In the event an infection is suspected, discuss with your physician if you should leave quality jewelry or an appropriate substitute in place

FOR PARTICULAR AREAS NAVEL:

- You can protect your piercing from excess irritation, physical trauma from activities like sports, or tight clothing with a hard, vented eye patch (sold at pharmacies). To avoid irritation from adhesive/medical tape, you can secure it over your piercing using tights/stockings or using a length of elastic/ace-type bandage around your body.

EAR/EAR CARTILAGE AND FACIAL:

- Clean bedding and pillow cases are important. You can use the t-shirt trick: slip your pillow in a large, clean t-shirt. You can get up to four clean surfaces for sleeping by rotating the pillow and turning the t-shirt inside out.
- Surfaces like phones, headphones, eyeglasses, etc can be cleaned with an appropriate disinfectant. Items like hats, scarves, headbands, etc should be washed regularly.
- Use caution when styling your hair and advise your stylist of a new or healing piercing.
- Sleeping directly on a healing cartilage piercing can cause irritation, even causing shifts in the piercing's angle. Placing a travel pillow, on top of your pillow, and then placing your ear in the opening can be helpful to avoid this

NIPPLE:

- The support of a tight cotton shirt or sports bra may provide protection and feel comfortable, especially for sleeping.

GENITAL:

- Genital Piercings - especially Triangles, Prince Alberts, Ampallangs, and Apadravyas - can bleed freely for the first few days. Be prepared. Additional cleaning after urination is not necessary.

(CONTINUED ON THE BACK)