

Suggested Aftercare for Body



**SUGGESTED
AFTERCARE
GUIDELINES
FOR BODY
PIERCINGS**

Piercing

Cleaning Solutions

- Packaged sterile saline (with no additives, read the label) is a gentle choice for piercing aftercare. *If sterile saline is not available in your region a sea salt solution mixture can be a viable alternative.* Dissolve 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon (.75 to 1.42 grams) of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt into one cup (8 oz / 250 ml) of warm distilled or bottled water. A stronger mixture is not better; a saline solution that is too strong can irritate the piercing.

Cleaning Instructions for Body Piercings

- **WASH** your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- **SALINE** rinse as needed during healing. For certain placements it may be easier to apply using clean gauze saturated with saline solution. A brief rinse afterward will remove any residue.
- *If your piercer suggests using soap, gently lather around the piercing and rinse as needed. Avoid using harsh soaps, or soaps with dyes, fragrances, or triclosan.*
- **RINSE** thoroughly to remove all traces of the soap from the piercing. It is not necessary to rotate the jewelry through the piercing.
- **DRY** by gently patting with clean, disposable paper products because cloth towels can harbor bacteria and snag on jewelry, causing injury.

What is Normal?

- Initially: some bleeding, localized swelling, tenderness, or bruising.
- During healing: some discoloration, itching, secretion of a whitish-yellow fluid (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 part of your daily hygiene routine, normal but smelly bodily secretions may accumulate.
- A piercing may seem healed before the healing process is complete. This is because tissue heals from the outside in, and although it feels fine, the interior remains fragile. Be patient, and keep cleaning throughout the entire healing period.
- Even healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes after having been there for years! This varies from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in—do not leave it empty.

What To Do

- Wash your hands prior to touching the piercing; leave it alone except when cleaning. During healing, it is not necessary to rotate your jewelry.
- 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; listen to your

body.

- 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 moving jewelry in an unhealed piercing, or picking away dried discharge with your fingers.
- Avoid cleaning with Betadine®, Hibiciens®, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, Dial® or other soaps containing triclosan, as these can damage cells.
- 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 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.
- Avoid stress and recreational drug use, including excessive caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.
- Avoid submerging the piercing in unhygienic bodies of water such as lakes, pools, hot tubs, etc. Or, protect your piercing using a waterproof wound-sealant bandage. These are available at most drugstores.
- 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 the place for the entire healing period. See a qualified piercer to perform any jewelry change that becomes necessary during healing. See the APP website to locate an APP member, or to request a copy of our Picking Your Piercer brochure.)
- Contact your piercer if your jewelry must be removed (such as for a medical procedure). There are non-metallic jewelry alternatives available.
- Leave jewelry in at all times. Even old or well-healed piercing can shrink or close in minutes even after having been there for years. If removed, re-insertion can be difficult or impossible.
- With clean hands or paper product, 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, simply remove the jewelry (or

have a professional piercer remove it) and continue cleaning the piercing until the hole closes. In most cases only a small mark will remain.

- In the event an infection is suspected, quality jewelry or an inert alternative should be left in place to allow for drainage of the infection. If the jewelry is removed, the surface cells can close up, which can seal the infection inside the piercing channel and result in an abscess. Do not remove jewelry unless instructed to by a medical professional.

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.

Nipples:

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

Genital:

- Genital Piercings—especially Prince Alberts, Ampallangs, and Apadravyas—can bleed freely for the first few days. Be prepared.
- Urinate after using soap to clean any piercing that is near the urethra.
- Wash your hands before touching on (or near) 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 monogamous relationships.
- Use clean, disposable barriers on sex toys.
- Use a new container of water-based lubricant; do not use saliva.
- After sex, an additional saline soak or clean water rinse is suggested.

Each body is unique and healing times vary considerably. If you have any questions, please contact your piercer



**SUGGESTED
AFTERCARE
GUIDELINES
FOR ORAL
PIERCINGS**

[Suggested Aftercare for Oral Piercing](#)

Cleaning Solutions

Use any or all of the following solutions for inside the mouth:

- Antimicrobial or antibacterial alcohol-free mouth rinse*
- Plain clean water
- Packaged sterile saline (with no additives, read the label) is a gentle choice for piercing aftercare. Saline for contact lenses should not be used as piercing aftercare. Wound wash saline is available as a spray at pharmacies throughout North America.
- Sea salt mixture: Dissolve 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon (.75 to 1.42 grams) of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt into one cup (8 oz / 250 ml) of warm distilled or bottled water. A stronger mixture is not better; a saline solution that is too strong can irritate the piercing.

(If you have high blood pressure or a heart condition, please check with your doctor before using a saline product as your primary cleaning solution.)

(Consult your piercer, the APP website, or call (888) 888-APP for current suggested products.)

Cleaning Instructions for Inside the Mouth

Rinse mouth as needed (4-5 times) daily with a cleaning solution for 30-60 seconds, after meals and at bedtime during the entire healing period. When you over clean, it may cause discoloration or irritation of your mouth and piercing.

Cleaning Instructions for the Exterior of Labret (Cheek & Lip) Piercings

- **WASH** your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- **SALINE** rinse as needed during healing. For certain placements it may be easier to apply using clean gauze saturated with saline solution. A brief rinse afterward will remove any residue.
- *If your piercer suggests using soap, gently lather around the piercing and rinse as needed. Avoid using harsh soaps, or soaps with dyes, fragrances, or triclosan.*
- **RINSE** thoroughly to remove all traces of the soap from the piercing. It is not necessary to rotate the jewelry through the piercing.
- **DRY** by gently patting with clean, disposable paper products because cloth towels can harbor bacteria and snag on jewelry, causing injury.

What Is Normal?

For the first three to five days: significant swelling, light bleeding, bruising, and/or tenderness.

After that: Some swelling, light secretion of a whitish yellow fluid (not pus).

A piercing may seem healed before the healing process is complete. This is because they heal from the outside in, and although it feels fine, the tissue remains fragile on the

inside. Be patient, and keep cleaning throughout the entire healing period. Even healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes 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 To Help Reduce Swelling

Allow small pieces of ice to dissolve in the mouth.

Take an over the counter, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen or naproxen sodium according to package instructions.

Don't speak or move your jewelry more than necessary.

Sleep with your head elevated above your heart during the first few nights.

To Maintain Good Oral Hygiene

Use a new soft-bristled toothbrush and store it in a clean area away from other toothbrushes.

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 build up.

To Stay Healthy

The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.

Get enough sleep and eat a nutritious diet.

Oral Piercing Hints and Tips

- Jewelry

Once the swelling has subsided, it is vital to replace the original, longer jewelry with a shorter post to avoid intra-oral damage. Consult your piercer for their downsize policy. Because this necessary jewelry change often occurs during healing, it should be done by a qualified piercer.

Contact your piercer for a non-metallic jewelry alternative if your metal jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure).

Should you decide you no longer want the piercing, simply remove the jewelry (or have a professional piercer remove it) and continue cleaning the piercing until the hole closes. In most cases only a small mark will remain.

In the even an infection is suspected, quality jewelry or an inert alternative should be left in place to allow for drainage or the infection. Should the jewelry be removed, the surface cells can close up sealing the infection inside the piercing channel, resulting in an abscess. Until an infection is cleared up, the the jewelry in!

- Eating

Slowly eat small bites of food.

Avoid eating spicy, salty, acidic, or hot temperature foods or beverages for a few days.

Cold foods and beverages are soothing and help reduce swelling.

Foods like mashed potatoes and oatmeal are hard to eat because they stick to your mouth and jewelry.

For tongue piercing, try to keep your tongue level in your mouth as you eat because the jewelry can get between your teeth when your tongue turns.

For labret (cheek and lip) piercings: be cautious about opening your mouth too wide as this can result in the jewelry catching on your teeth.

Each body is unique and healing times vary considerably. If you have any questions, please contact your piercer.

What To Avoid

Do not play with your jewelry. Long term effects include permanent damage to teeth, gums, and other oral structures. See the APP's Brochure: Oral Piercing Risks and Safety Measures for more information.

Avoid undue trauma; excessive talking or playing with the jewelry during healing can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration, and other complications.

Avoid using mouthwash containing alcohol. It can irritate the piercing and delay healing.

Avoid oral sexual contact including French (wet) kissing or oral sex during healing (even with a long-term partner).

Avoid chewing gum, tobacco, fingernails, pencils, sunglasses, etc.

Avoid sharing plates, cups, and eating utensils.

Avoid smoking! It increases risks and lengthens healing time.

Avoid stress and all recreational drug use.

Avoid aspirin, alcohol, and large amounts of caffeine as long as you are experiencing bleeding or swelling.

Avoid submerging healing piercings in bodies of water such as lakes, pools, etc.

Each body is unique and healing times vary considerably. If you have any questions, please contact your piercer.



**STRETCHING
YOUR
PIERCING**

Stretching Your Piercing

Stretching is the gradual enlargement of a piercing. Stretching a piercing can be easy and safe so long as the risks are considered and some basic precautions are followed.

WHY STRETCH? As your piercing increases in size your jewelry options can become more detailed and prominent. Properly stretched piercings displace weight and stress over a greater surface area so that larger jewelry can be worn safely and comfortably.

When To Stretch

There is no set timetable that is correct for stretching each type of piercing or for each person. In fact, it is possible to have a pair of matching piercings with one that stretches more easily than the other. After moving up to a larger size, you must allow enough time for the tissue to recuperate and stabilize before repeating the process. This can take anywhere from several weeks to months or even longer, depending on the particular piercing and your tissue. Safe stretching involves both time and patience. At a minimum you want your piercing fully healed, matured, and pliable before you consider stretching. Consult a professional piercer if you are unsure of your piercing being ready to stretch.

Considerations

Stretching an existing, healed piercing is not the same as receiving a new piercing. Carefully consider the following before committing to a potentially permanent body modification:

How large can you go and still have the piercing return to its prior appearance if you take the jewelry out?

Experienced piercers observe varied results which seem to depend on several factors, including the type of jewelry worn, and how the piercing was stretched. Stretching too quickly can easily result in excessive scar tissue. Scarring in a piercing may limit tissue flexibility, lessen vascularity, limit future stretching, and reduce the piercing's ability to tighten or close should you decide to remove jewelry. Stretching a piercing may result in a permanent change. Be prepared for the possibility it may not return to its original appearance.

Overstretching (Going too far and/or too fast)

Overstretching tends to result in a buildup of scar tissue and reduction of healthy blood flow. It can also cause an unsightly "blowout," in which a section of skin pushes out from the interior of the channel. Overstretching can damage your tissue, cause thinning, or even lead to the total loss of your piercing. Stretching more than one full gauge size should be avoided. Half sizes should be used when possible, particularly in larger size jumps or in sensitive areas. Piercings can only handle small incremental stretches without the delicate lining of the piercing becoming stressed, torn, or otherwise damaged.

Your body needs sufficient time to rejuvenate blood flow and produce new

healthy tissue, this can take weeks or months.

Stretching Your Piercing

If you choose to stretch your piercing yourself, the safest method is to allow your initial jewelry to remain in place for an extended period of time. So long as your piercing is showing no signs of tenderness, discharge or general irritation, a properly cleaned or sterilized piece of jewelry (that is no more than one gauge size larger than your current jewelry) may be gently inserted into your piercing. Forcing jewelry in using pressure is not a proper practice when stretching. You want to allow the piercing to relax enough that it can accept the next size with little or no effort. If the jewelry does not go in easily, or if you experience any significant discomfort or bleeding, immediately stop. This may mean your piercing is not ready to be stretched or that you require professional assistance.

Seeking out a professional piercer can be a wise choice for stretching, particularly if you have a larger goal size. Your piercer can evaluate your piercing and set realistic goals for stretching. A professional can help you choose the proper jewelry material, size, and style. Having your jewelry properly cleaned or sterilized, and inserted for you can help avoid overstretching or other damage that can lead to scarring. In some situations a tool called an insertion taper may be necessary to properly install your selected jewelry. Tapers should be considered a professional instrument, the same as a piercing needle. Tapers are not meant to force excessively large jewelry into a piercing, merely to help aid insertion. Misuse of any instrument can result in damage.

Does stretching hurt?

With many soft tissue piercings such as the earlobe there should be little to no discomfort with proper stretching. Some more sensitive piercings such as the nostril, lip, cartilage, or genital area may be uncomfortable even when stretched properly. Discomfort should never be severe with any stretching, piercings should never bleed or appear torn when stretched. This is a sign of overstretching. If these issues occur you may need to drop to a smaller size, or visit a professional piercer for assistance, to avoid damage to your piercing.

Jewelry

- In a freshly stretched piercing, we suggest wearing jewelry of a style and material approved by the APP for new piercings. Avoid low quality jewelry or materials that are not appropriate for fresh piercings, such as acrylic, silicone, and organics (wood, bone, stone, or horn). See the APP brochure “Jewelry for Initial Piercings” to learn more.
- Alternative materials (such as the ones listed above) may be worn, if desired, after the area has fully healed. See the APP brochure “Jewelry for Healed Piercings” for details.
- Solid plugs and hollow eyelets are especially popular styles. For initial stretches, they should be single flared or non-flared, and preferably without grooves for O-rings. Caution: It can be damaging to put double-flared jewelry in a freshly stretched piercing.
- In the USA, jewelry thickness is most commonly measured by gauge* (rather than millimeters), and above a certain size (00 gauge), by fractions of an inch. The measurements become progressively bigger, so the stretch from 14 to 12 gauge is

comparatively minimal (.43mm), but going from 4 up to 2 gauge is a substantial jump (1.36mm). The larger you go, the longer you usually need to wait between stretches. This is due to the escalating size differences between gauges, and also because the tissue often becomes more difficult to expand as you strain its capacity. If available, jewelry sized by millimeter (commonly used outside of the USA) increments will result in more gradual stretching.

- Do not use externally threaded jewelry or any jewelry with sharp edges for stretching as these can easily tear or scratch your piercing.
- Many large or heavy ornaments - especially hanging pieces - are not suited as a means of stretching or for freshly stretched piercings. Heavy rings, for example, can put excessive pressure against the bottom of a piercing and cause uneven stretching and/or thinning of the tissue. Once the area has recovered from enlargement, wearing heavier jewelry can be worn and may result in additional stretching.
- Do not wear tapered jewelry such as talons, taper pins, or spirals to stretch. These are not meant to be used as stretching tools and can frequently cause tissue damage from expanding too quickly. When tapered jewelry is used for stretching, the O-rings that keep the ornament in place can cause irritation and tissue thinning from excessive pressure.

Aftercare

Follow your piercer's advice about leaving your new, larger jewelry in place for a sufficient time. It could be difficult or impossible to reinsert the jewelry if removed too soon - even briefly - because the channel could shrink very quickly. Avoid removing jewelry in a recently stretched piercing for several days, possibly weeks.

A newly stretched piercing may experience some tenderness and inflammation. It is usually mild and may pass in as little as a few days. Still, it is prudent to follow the care suggested for new piercings. For details, consult your piercer and refer to the APP "Suggested Aftercare Guidelines" brochures.

Long-Term Maintenance

Because a stretched piercing has an increased surface area, the normal deposits of piercing related discharge are also amplified. For long-term maintenance, wash or rinse your healed piercing under warm water in the shower as part of your daily hygiene routine. If jewelry is easily removed, take it out occasionally while bathing for a more thorough cleansing of both the tissue and jewelry. Consult your piercer about appropriate care for jewelry made of natural or alternative materials.

Resting (Especially for Earlobes)

This is the practice of regularly removing large-size jewelry (approximately 2 gauge (6mm) and thicker) for a certain interval to help keep the piercing healthy. Such a break relieves the tissue of the jewelry's weight and pressure, and increases circulation - particularly at the bottom of the piercing, which supports most of the burden. This should be done only after your piercing has recovered to the point where you can comfortably remove the jewelry for at least a few minutes at a time. Experiment to determine the amount of time your jewelry can be removed without the hole shrinking

too much. Generally, the longer you have worn a particular size, the easier this becomes. Check with your piercer to see if resting is advisable in your case.

Massage & Moisturizing

Massage helps to break down scar tissue and stimulates circulation to promote healthy, vital skin. Natural oils such as jojoba, coconut, etc. may be used to moisturize and prevent dryness, which can result in brittleness, weakness, and tears. For a few minutes (during your rest period, if you have one) massage the tissue thoroughly with your chosen oil.

Troubleshooting

Soreness, redness, weeping, or inflammation of your tissue may indicate a problem. You may have stretched too far, too quickly, or you may be having a negative reaction to the material, size, or style of your jewelry. Treat an overstretched piercing like a brand-new one and follow appropriate care and cleaning. Failure to do so can result in serious consequences, including infection and tissue loss.

You may need to downsize (go back to your previous size) if the piercing is significantly irritated. Although you're probably eager to get to your goal size, downsizing is a great way to keep your tissue healthy. Afterwards, you will need to wait at least a few additional months before attempting further stretching. Go slow from the start and avoid having to downsize or stall your process.

The most common location for a blowout is the earlobe. It may not be as painful as it looks, but it does indicate a problem. You should consult your piercer. You may need to downsize, resume aftercare procedures, and/or follow other suggestions as outlined by your piercer.

*** 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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