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Piercing Aftercare

What Is Normal While Healing My Piercing?

Your piercing is a small puncture wound, so swelling, bruising, bleeding and pain/discomfort are all normal parts of initial healing, this should stop after a week or so. You may notice white/pale yellow discharge for the duration of your healing. Healing times vary from person to person and piercing to piercing, anything up to 6 months is to be expected for most piercings, but many people find they heal faster than this. Downsizing your jewellery is recommended after 6-8 weeks (1 week for tongue piercings). Return to your piercer for this, so that appropriate jewellery can be fitted, and it will be changed in a clean and safe environment. Sometimes more than one downsize is required.

How Do I Clean My Piercing?

Let your body do the work; but help it along with the following. Wash your hands thoroughly, apply saline solution to the area at both sides of your piercing (either spray directly or use it on a clean cotton bud or gauze) use a cotton bud to wipe away any discharge or 'crusties', then dry thoroughly with a clean cotton bud/gauze. Clean your piercing twice daily – building it into your daily routine will help. For oral (in the mouth) piercings, rinse with alcohol free mouthwash after everything you eat/drink/smoke for the first week of healing, and then as needed after that (use saline as above for the end of the piercing outside your mouth if applicable). For genital piercing, using clean water and a tiny amount of intimate wash once daily is sufficient. Once a day, rinse your piercing with clean warm water (in the shower is ideal) then follow with a saline clean. Harsh chemicals can damage the delicate cells repairing your piercing, avoid using anything like Savlon, TCP, surgical spirit or any antiseptic creams or oils (lavender, tea tree, etc.) or soaps – these things can slow down your healing process. See overleaf for approximate healing times and notes on caring for specific piercings.

Things You Can Do To Aid Healing

Maintain good health – a healthy body will create a healthy piercing (being ill can cause a longer healing time, or for settled piercings to revert back to their 'healing' phase). Taking multivitamins, especially Zinc, can help your piercing heal faster. Keep your hands (and other people's hands and body fluids) off your piercing – touching or moving the jewellery can cause irritation bumps, which can be tricky to get rid of. Get plenty of sleep and stay hydrated to allow your body to do what it needs to. Protect your piercing with a dressing if you feel it is needed. A check up at around the 2-month mark is advised, so feel free to call back.

I Think There Is A Problem With My Piercing

Firstly, do not panic. Return to your piercer or contact them (details above) as soon as you can if you are concerned in any way. If you want to, you can take anti-inflammatories and painkillers to help reduce swelling/pain provided you are OK to take them (read the label on ANY product/medication before using it; and follow the information/instructions closely). Warm, soaked chamomile teabags placed on the piercing for 10mins 2-3 times a week after the first two weeks can soothe an irritated piercing. If you feel the piercing has swollen more than the jewellery will allow, return to have your jewellery upsized. Signs of infection include: having bright red ring around the piercing, a constant darker yellow discharge and the area will feel warmer than usual. If you think you have an infection, DO NOT REMOVE THE JEWELLERY and return to your piercer for advice. Unless you are extremely worried about your piercing, there is usually no need to seek medical advice, however if you feel it is urgent, it is advised to do so. All piercings can migrate or 'grow out' and leave scarring, you can minimise the chance of this by not touching/moving the piercing and retiring the piercing if it migrates too far – return to your piercer for advice. Lumps/bumps are a common issue, they are usually caused by the piercing being fiddled with, but makeup, hair products, improper cleaning and not downsizing your jewellery will also contribute to this. Return to your piercer (or use contact information above) if you need help or advice. Any issues with your piercing must be brought back to your piercer – if taken to another studio or piercer, we can no longer take responsibility. If medical advice is sought, that advice is prioritised over anything stated here.

Things To Avoid

Avoid swimming for as long as possible after being pierced (minimum 1 month). Do not soak your piercing for the first 2 weeks of healing (getting it wet is fine, so bath/shower as normal, just do NOT soak). Do not sleep on a healing piercing – this can cause it to heal at an angle which is irreversible. Do not fiddle or play with the jewellery or force it to rotate/move through the hole – this is the main cause of irritation bumps. Keep tight clothing, long hair, makeup, fake tans, hair products, perfumes, etc. well away from all healing piercings.

Your Jewellery

The jewellery you have been pierced with is sterilized, implant grade titanium (unless stated otherwise by your piercer) all threading is internal (post has a hole which the ball screws into) and is large enough to allow for swelling. Your jewellery size and type are written above. Jewellery is designed to be removed, so can come loose by accident (especially if the jewellery is being moved or played with) – make sure you check the threaded parts of your jewellery regularly to reduce the risk of lost jewellery (righty tighty, lefty loosey!). Piercings can close up very quickly so, even when healed, so never leave your jewellery out for any longer than absolutely necessary.

Ear Piercings

Avoid sleeping on your piercing – a U-shaped travel pillow or a 'doughnut' pillow in bed will support your head/neck whilst preventing contact with your ear. Keeping headphones, mobile phones, etc. clean will minimise infection risk, as these are in contact with your ear, so any bacteria on them can cause problems. Take care when styling your hair – and warn your hairdresser about your new piercing. Downsizing piercings on the outer edge of the ear is very important – this should be done as soon as the initial swelling has subsided (about 6-8 weeks after piercing). Sleeping with your head elevated above your heart can help the swelling subside faster.

Surface Piercing/Microdermals/Skin Divers

For divers/dermals your piercer will (when possible) cover it with a waterproof dressing once it is done, a plaster or dressing should be worn for the first week of healing and changed at least once a day, and the piercing cleaned. Continue to clean the piercing (as overleaf) after the plaster-time is over, however most people find that leaving the piercing to heal on its own works well.
Unwaxed/unfragranced dental floss is ideal to remove any build up under the disc of a microdermal. Divers/dermals can be removed by your piercer – they do not require surgery. The jewellery which is under your skin (the implant/staple bar) should NOT be removed, but the balls/discs can be changed after 2-3 months, once any swelling has subsided. Skin divers are a fixed piece of jewellery and cannot be changed. Microdermals and skin divers heal much faster than surface piercings, but they can be pulled or knocked out more easily than surface piercings, wear a waterproof plaster over the piercing if you're concerned about this (especially if you are in an environment where the piercing could be pulled at). Surface piercings, microdermals and skin divers are tricky to heal fully and there is a higher risk or rejection or other healing issues than with other piercings. If planning on more than one of this type of piercing, it is sensible to get one done as a 'test' to see how you cope with it, this will minimise any scarring. This type of piercing is best viewed as temporary due to the higher risk of rejection by your body.

Lip/Tongue/Cheeks/Other Oral Piercings

You will experience some swelling, which may make eating/speaking a little difficult. It is recommended that you change your tongue bar for a shorter one 1-2 weeks after having it pierced. This will make it easier to eat/speak and avoid damage to your teeth – playing with the piercing in your mouth can cause tooth damage at any time. Lip and cheek piercings can take longer for the swelling to subside but can usually be downsized within 6 weeks. Sleeping with your head elevated above your heart can help the swelling subside faster. Stick to eating soft foods such as soup, ice-cream, yoghurt, porridge, etc. until you feel comfortable eating solid food. Sucking on crushed up ice-cubes/cold drinks can also help reduce swelling. Avoid spicy foods, smoking and alcohol for the first week of healing as these can irritate the piercing. You may notice a yellow/white furry coating on your tongue for the first week, this is normal. Use your toothbrush to gently brush away the coating. A new toothbrush after being pierced is recommended.

Navel/Nipple Piercings

Avoid tight clothing directly on the piercing area, Waistbands of clothing on your lower half should sit below the navel, and any bras should have a smooth, soft surface in direct contact with nipple piercings (wearing a bra will minimise movement and stop the jewellery being snagged or twisted). In some cases, it can take over a year to fully heal nipple/navel piercings. Be patient, clean the piercing regularly and return to your piercer if there are any problems, or if you are worried about your piercing. Be sure to clean and dry the inside of your navel as well as the outside. Avoid wearing dangly jewellery constantly in navel/nipple piercings as it can be easily snagged. Nipple and navel piercings can be kept in during pregnancy (your piercer can help advise about this). However, always remove nipple jewellery (choking hazard) while breastfeeding and replace once feeding is done.

Genital Piercings

In the case of genital piercing, there may be some bleeding for up to 24 hours after getting the piercing and 'spotting' for up to a week. Wearing comfortable but fitted underwear (jockey-type shorts/full briefs) and padding around the area with tissue will hold everything still and minimise movement, wearing sanitary pads (whatever your gender!) for the first week will stop blood staining clothing. If you are worried about the bleeding, please come back and see your piercer about it, contact a doctor/hospital if you need help urgently. Always wear clean underwear during healing. Avoid contact with other people's body fluids (saliva, sweat. semen, etc.) during healing. There is no reason to avoid sexual contact/intercourse after having a genital piercing done, as long as you feel up to it – which could take a few days to a week – but be sure to use barrier protection (condoms for example) until the piercing has healed fully. When the piercing has healed, take extra care to make sure that condoms aren't torn or weakened by the jewellery, use a water-based lubricant (KY Jelly for example) to minimise the risk of this. Clean your piercing with clean, warm water after any type of sexual contact. Pregnant people are often advised to remove jewellery from intimate piercings in the early stages of the pregnancy so that the area has fully healed and will not cause any complications while giving birth.

Healing Times

The times below are given as a guide, anything up to a year is normal for basic piercing. If you've had a longer healing period with previous piercings, you can expect a longer healing period than those shown. Just because a piercing is no longer red, swollen, crusty or sore this doesn't necessarily mean it is healed (piercings heal from the outside in, so while the exterior will look healed, the interior will still be fragile). If in doubt, leave the jewellery in and return to your piercer for a check-up. You must not donate blood or other body tissue for at least 4 months after getting a piercing. If planning on stretching a piercing, wait for it to heal fully and then give it a least another month before starting to stretch.

Earlobe/All Inner Oral Piercings/Septum/Genital…..… 1 – 3 months

Eyebrow/Ear (cartilage)/Nose/Lip/Bridge……. 3 – 6 months

Navel/Nipple/Microdermals/Skin Diver…….… 6 – 12 months

Cheek/Surface Piercing……..…….. 6 – 18 months

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS!