

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.
- 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 long-term 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.

SURFACE ANCHORS:

- These piercings require maintenance during their entire lifetime because matter can build up underneath the threaded top causing the piercing to become irritated.
- Saline soaks are suggested at least weekly, even after the piercing is fully healed.
- Avoid putting makeup on these piercings even after healing.
- Even with proper care, surface anchors may be less permanent than other body piercings.



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*.

Use of this brochure does not imply membership in the APP. A current list of APP members can be found at safepiercing.org. False claims of membership should be reported to the APP.

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2013 Edition



**SUGGESTED
AFTERCARE
GUIDELINES
FOR BODY
PIERCINGS**

CLEANING SOLUTIONS

Use one or both of the following solutions for healing piercings:

- Packaged sterile saline solution with no additives (read the label), or a sea salt mixture: Dissolve ¼ to ½ teaspoon of non-iodized (iodine free), fine-grain sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of warm distilled or bottled water. A mixture of ½–1 teaspoon of salt to a quart (32 oz.) of water can be made and stored in the refrigerator, then a small amount can be dispensed and warmed for use each time. A stronger mixture is not better; saline solution that is too strong can irritate the piercing.
- A mild, fragrance-free liquid soap.

CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS FOR BODY PIERCINGS

- **WASH** your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- **SALINE** soak for five to ten minutes once or more per day. Invert a cup of warm saline solution over the area to form a vacuum. For certain piercings it may be easier to apply using clean gauze or paper towels saturated with saline solution. A brief rinse afterward will remove any residue.
- **SOAP** once a day. While showering, lather up a pearl size drop of the soap to clean the jewelry and the piercing. Leave the cleanser on the piercing for up to thirty seconds, or follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- **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. Cloth towels can harbor bacteria and snag on jewelry causing injury.

WHAT IS NORMAL?

- Initially: some bleeding, localized swelling, tenderness, and/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 might 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 initial healing period.
- Even healed piercings that you have had for years can shrink or close in minutes! 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 it alone except when cleaning. During healing it is not necessary to rotate your jewelry.
- 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.

TO STAY HEALTHY

- The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.
- Get enough sleep.
- To help healing and bolster your ability to fight infection eat a nutritious diet.¹ If you don't, consider taking nutritional supplements daily.
- Avoid emotional stress, which can increase healing times by up to 40%.²

WHAT TO AVOID

- Avoid cleaning with alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, Dial® or other soaps containing triclosan,³ 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 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 (such as 3M™ Nexcare™ Clean Seals or Tegaderm). 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.

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 Impact of Psychological Stress on Wound Healing: Methods and Mechanisms" Gouin, J.P. 2011. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3052954/>

³"The ubiquitous triclosan." Pesticides and You 24.3 Glaser, Aviva (2004): 12-17.

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 for a non-metallic jewelry alternative if your metal jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure).
- Leave jewelry in at all times. Even healed piercings that you have had for years can shrink or close in minutes! If removed, reinsertion can be difficult or impossible. See the APP brochure *Preparing for Medical and Dental Procedures* for more information.
- With clean hands or paper product, be sure to regularly check threaded ends on your jewelry for tightness ("righty-tighty, lefty-loosey").
- Carry a clean spare ball in case of loss or breakage.
- 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 should 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. Until an infection is cleared up, leave in quality jewelry or an appropriate substitute.

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 elastic 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 phones, 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.