



("Hints and Tips" continued)

### TIPS FOR NAVEL PIERCINGS

- Wear a hard, vented eye patch (sold at pharmacies) under tight clothing (like nylon stockings) or use a piece of ace bandage around your body to keep it in place. Don't use tape because it can cause a rash on your skin. This patch can protect your piercing from being hit during sports or other dangers, and reduce irritation from tight clothes.
- Wear clean, comfortable, breathable clothing that protects your piercing while you are sleeping.

### TIPS FOR EAR/EAR CARTILAGE AND FACIAL PIERCINGS

- 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.
- Keep everything super clean that comes near or touches the pierced area: telephones, headphones, eyeglasses, helmets, and hats.
- Be careful when styling your hair, and let your stylist know if you are healing a piercing.

Each body is different and your healing time may be a lot longer or shorter than your friends'.

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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This brochure contains wording and information written specifically for minors. For additional information, please see our brochure *Suggested Aftercare Guidelines for Body Piercings*.

**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 think you have an infection, visit a doctor, but be aware that many doctors have not received specific training about piercing. Your local piercer may be able to suggest 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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2011 EDITION



# TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEW PIERCING





## WHAT TO CLEAN WITH

### USE ONE OR BOTH OF THE FOLLOWING PRODUCTS ON YOUR HEALING PIERCING:

- Packaged sterile saline solution made for wound care (read the label), or a non-iodized sea salt mixture you make yourself: dissolve 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of warm distilled or bottled water. A stronger solution can irritate your piercing, so don't put in too much salt!
- A mild, fragrance-free liquid soap—preferably antimicrobial or germicidal.

(Ask your piercer, check the APP website, or call 888.888.1APP for the best products.)

## HOW TO CLEAN YOUR PIERCING

- **WASH** your hands really well before you clean or touch your piercing for any reason.
- **SALINE** soak for five minutes once or more per day. Seal a cup of warm saline solution over the area. For some piercings it will be easier to use clean gauze or paper towels soaked in saline solution. Rinse after you salt soak because dried salt crystals could hurt you and your piercing.
- **SOAP** only once or twice a day. While showering, lather up a dime sized drop of the soap to clean the jewelry and the piercing. Leave the soap on the piercing no more than thirty seconds.
- **RINSE** to remove **all** of the soap from the piercing. You do not have to rotate your jewelry through the piercing.
- **DRY** gently with clean, disposable paper products. Cloth towels could snag on jewelry, and they might have bacteria on them.

## WHAT IS NORMAL?

- At first: some bleeding, bruising, swelling, redness, and soreness or mild pain.
- During healing: some discoloration, itching, oozing of a whitish-yellow fluid (not pus) that will form some crust on the jewelry. Your skin may tighten around the jewelry as you heal.
- After healing: the jewelry may not move easily in the piercing; **do not** force it. If you don't clean your piercing as a part of your daily bathing, normal but smelly secretions may build up.
- A piercing may seem just fine before the whole healing process is done. This is because they heal from the outside in. Even if it feels fine, the new skin is weak on the inside. **Be patient**, and keep cleaning all the way to the end of entire healing period.
- If you have had a piercing for years, it can still shrink or close in minutes if you take out your jewelry! This is different from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in—do not leave the hole empty.

## WHAT TO DO

- Wash your hands before you touch the piercing; leave it alone except when cleaning. During healing, you do not have to rotate, turn, or move 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 sheets and towels are washed and changed weekly.
- Showers are safer than baths because bathtubs can harbor germs. Before you get into a bath tub, clean it first, and rinse off your piercing when you get out.

## WHAT TO AVOID

- Avoid cleaning with Betadine®, Hibiclens®, rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, and Dial® or other strong soaps, because these can damage your healing piercing. Also don't use ointments because they don't let your piercing get the air circulation it needs and may contain ingredients that are not safe for long-term use.
- Avoid Bactine®, pierced ear care solutions, and other products containing Benzalkonium Chloride (BZK). This can be irritating and should not be used for long-term care.
- Avoid cleaning too much. This can irritate your piercing and make it take longer to heal.
- Avoid irritation like friction from clothing, too much motion of the area, playing with the jewelry, and rough cleaning. These could make ugly and uncomfortable scar tissue form, and cause other problems like migration and a longer healing time.
- Avoid rough play, unwashed hands on (or even anywhere *near*) your piercing, and contact with others' bodily fluids like saliva while you are healing.
- Avoid stress and recreational drug use, including too much caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.
- Avoid putting a healing piercing in a lake, pool, hot tub, etc. First, protect your piercing by using a waterproof bandage (such as Clean Seals™). You can buy them in any drugstore.
- 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 your initial jewelry, leave it in for the whole healing period. If you have an emergency and need to change your jewelry during healing, visit a qualified piercer for help. (See the APP website to find APP members, or for a copy of our *Picking your Piercer* brochure.)
- Contact your piercer for a non-metallic retainer if your metal jewelry must be removed (for example, if your doctor or dentist makes you take it out for a procedure).
- Leave jewelry in at all times. Your piercing can shrink or close super fast—even if you've had it for years. If you take it out, getting it back in later can be difficult or impossible.
- With clean hands be sure to check threaded ends on your jewelry for tightness daily. ("Righty-tighty, lefty-loosey.")
- Carry a clean spare ball in case you lose or break one.
- If you decide you don't want your piercing any more, simply remove the jewelry (or have a professional piercer remove it). Keep cleaning the piercing daily until the hole closes. Most of the time, only a small mark will be visible.
- If you think you have an infection, **leave in** quality jewelry so the infection can drain. If you take the jewelry out, the surface can close up. That can trap the infection inside the piercing and cause an abscess. **Do not** remove jewelry unless instructed to do so by a medical professional.
- For more information on body jewelry, see the APP Brochures, *Jewelry for Initial Piercings*, and *Jewelry for Healed Piercings*.

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