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Body and Facial Aftercare

CLEANING SOLUTIONS

A mild liquid antimicrobial/germicidal medicated soap such as Provon or Satin, and water. Inferior alternatives include products such as Almay Clearly Natural, Hypocare, NutriBiotic; or other mild, fragrance- and color-free liquid antibacterial soap. These should possibly be diluted with distilled or bottled water, depending on product strength. Also, mild non-iodized (no iodine) sea salt soaks as described below.

SALT WATER SOAKS

Mild sea salt water soaks are strongly suggested at least once a day to accelerate healing and increase your comfort. This may also help to reduce irritation in the area. Dissolve a pinch (1/4 teaspoon) of sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of warm or hot water in a clean cup. Distilled water is optimal. A stronger solution is not better as you can burn your piercing with too much salt. Invert it over the area to form a vacuum and soak directly for a few minutes. For certain placements it is easier to use a clean cotton ball or gauze pad soaked in the salt water and applied to the pierced area. Follow with a clear water rinse or splash then pat dry with paper products.

Salt water soaks help to stimulate air and blood circulation which facilitates healing. You can do a brief salt water soak before your daily cleaning(s) as well as several additional times a day. It is particularly advisable to soak before you do anything active, as it will prevent crust from being pulled inside the piercing as you move around. Salt water is the only additional product (other than the cleanser and water) we suggest you use to care for your piercing.

One soak per day should be for at least a few minutes. Additional soaks can be brief (1 minute or so) and still be effective for soothing the area and removing matter.

CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS

Body piercings need to be cleaned once or twice daily, every day, for the entire initial healing time. Most people clean morning and/or night, in the shower. Do not clean more often as this can irritate your piercing, and possibly delay your healing. For once-a-day cleanings, do it at the end of your day. Optimal frequency will depend on your skin sensitivity, activity level, and environmental factors.

Before cleanings wash hands thoroughly with liquid antibacterial soap and hot water. If you wish, you may wear disposable latex or vinyl gloves and/or also use a hand sanitizing gel. Never, never touch healing piercings with dirty hands. This is vital for avoiding infections. Prepare the area for the cleansing by rinsing or soaking with warm water and be sure to remove any stubborn crust using a cotton swab and warm water. Never pick with fingernails! This step is important for your comfort. Apply a small handful of cleaning solution to the area with your clean hands. Cleanse the area and the jewelry, and gently rotate the jewelry back and forth a few times to work the solution to the inside. (You do not need to rotate your jewelry during the first several cleanings). Allow the solution to cleanse there for a minute. You may bathe normally, just don't purposely work anything other than the cleanser onto the inside of the piercing. Rinse the area thoroughly under running water, while rotating the jewelry back and forth to completely

remove the cleanser from the inside and outside of the piercing. Gently pat dry with disposable paper products such as gauze or tissues, as cloth towels can harbor bacteria. Please try to be patient. Each body is unique, and healing times can vary considerably. If your piercing is tender or secreting you should continue the care regimen, even if it is past the stated average healing time range.

WHAT IS NORMAL

Bleeding, bruising, discoloration and/or swelling is not uncommon. Any break in the skin, including a new piercing can bleed or bruise. These are not indications of any complication. Reduce intake of aspirin, alcohol, and caffeine. For above-the-neck piercings try sleeping with your head elevated above your heart (prop up on some pillows) to limit overnight swelling. Studies show non-steroidal anti-inflammatory products such as Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.) can help minimize swelling.

Some tenderness or discomfort in the area of a new piercing is not unusual. You may feel stinging, burning, aching or other unpleasant sensations off and on for several days or longer. During healing there may be some itching.

Secretion of a fluid which contains blood plasma, lymph and dead cells is perfectly normal. It is fairly liquid, whitishyellow in color and forms a crust on the jewelry at the openings of the piercing. This is not pus, but indicates a healing piercing.

Once healed your piercing may secrete a semi-solid white malodorous substance from the oil glands called sebum. This is not pus, but indicates a healed piercing.

Piercings may have a tendency to have a series of "ups and downs" during healing by seeming healed and then regressing. Try to be patient, and do keep cleaning during the entire initial healing time, even if the piercing seems healed sooner.

Tightness is normal. Do not expect jewelry to swing freely in most body piercings, even after they are thoroughly healed.

WHAT TO DO

Wash your hands prior to contact on or near the area of your healing piercing!

Leave the piercing alone except for when you are cleaning it. It is not necessary or advisable to rotate the ring while healing except during cleanings.

Leave the starter jewelry in during the entire minimum initial healing time! (Assuming your initial jewelry is appropriate in terms of metal content, style, and size. Inappropriate jewelry should be changed out by a professional.) Those with captive-style rings or barbells (straight, bent, or circular) can change the bead/ball portion of the jewelry at any time. Check twice daily with clean hands to make sure the balls are screwed on tight on threaded jewelry such as barbells.

Both balls tighten to the right.

If you like your piercing leave jewelry in at all times. Even old, well-healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes after having been there for years! This varies from person to person, and even if your ear lobe piercings stay open without jewelry your body piercing may not! Contact your piercer if your jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure). Monofilament nylon or another inert non-metallic substance may be able to be inserted to maintain the piercing until jewelry can be reinserted.

Make sure your bedding is clean and changed frequently while you are healing, especially if pets get into your bed.

Wear clean, comfortable, breathable fabric clothing in the area of a body piercing.

A multi-vitamin mineral supplement containing zinc and vitamin C may help boost your body's healing abilities. Take it with your morning meal according to package instructions.

Get enough sleep, eat a nutritious diet, avoid undue stress, recreational drugs, and alcohol consumption. The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.

Showering is safer than taking a bath, as bath tubs tend to harbor bacteria. To bathe safely, clean your tub with a bleach product before each bath, and rinse the tub before you fill it. Also, be sure to do a running water rinse on your piercing when you are done in the tub. In the event that the piercing drains a thick pus discharge instead of the normal liquid secretion, you may wish to see a physician for evaluation and possible antibiotic treatment. If you do

have an infection, the jewelry should be left in the piercing to allow for drainage of pus. If the jewelry is removed, the holes can close up, resulting in an abscess. LEAVE YOUR JEWELRY IN !

WHAT TO AVOID

- Don't use alcohol, peroxide, Betadine or Hibiclens as they are overly strong and drying which can hinder healing.
- Don't apply any ointment such as Bacitracin, Neosporin or any triple antibiotic ointment on your piercing. These prevent oxygen from reaching the wound and form a sticky residue which can cause complications. They are not designed for use on healing piercings.
- Don't over clean. Cleaning more often than once or twice a day is NOT better. This can delay your healing and irritate your piercing.
- Don't use too many different products; select and use only one cleaning solution (such as Provon or Satin) plus sea salt.
- Avoid oral contact, rough play, and contact with others' bodily fluids on or near your piercing during healing. Don't use bandaids on a healing piercing. They limit air circulation and the adhesive can irritate the surrounding area.
 - Avoiding sleeping on a piercing during healing is advisable.
 - Don't hang charms or any object from your jewelry until the piercing is fully healed.
- Avoid submerging your piercings in water such as pools, lakes, jacuzzis, etc. unless you feel confident that the water is clean enough for you and an open wound (which is what your piercing is while it is healing). Most bodies of water harbor large amounts of bacteria. If there is sea life, motor oil or children in the water it is not clean enough! If you are going to be in water of questionable cleanliness, use a breathable, non water-permeable wound sealant such as Tegaderm or Clean Seals (available at drugstores and pharmacies) before you go in, to protect yourself and prevent dirty water from getting inside your open wound. Cleaning afterwards is not likely to be effective in preventing infection. Exercise during healing is fine, just "listen" to your body. Try to avoid activities that put undue stress on the area. Your own sweat and bodily fluids are not harmful to your piercing, provided you clean daily as directed.

HINTS FOR PARTICULAR AREAS

NAVEL

- Avoid tight, cinching belts and waistbands and inflexible clothing on the area during healing.
- 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

Shield piercings from hair spray and avoid getting lotion, make up and other foreign substances in piercings. Make sure pillow cases are clean and changed frequently. Clean your telephone receiver with a disinfectant and avoid contact with public telephones.

NIPPLE

It is advisable to sleep in a cotton tank top or tee shirt especially if you have any pets that get on or in your bed. Many women find sleeping in a bra or sports bra to be comfortable with a healing nipple piercing.

GENITAL

Sexual activity isn't prohibited, it must be hygienic. Listen to your body! If something feels sore, it means you need to ease up or stop for the time being. Use condoms (without Nonoxynol 9) and dental dams and for all sexual contact to prevent sharing of bodily fluids. This is required even if you are in a monogamous relationship. It is mandatory for

your health and safety during the entire minimum initial healing time. Pleasure Plus condoms have extra room for jewelry. Use water-based lubricants such as KY Jelly.

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. Be aware, however, that many doctors have no specific training or experience regarding piercing and may not be educated on how to best assist you.

Oral Piercing Aftercare

CLEANING SOLUTIONS

An alcohol-free antimicrobial or antibacterial mouth rinse should be used according to package instructions. Two examples are Tech 2000 and Biotene. These may be available in the oral medications section of your local drugstores. Check with your piercing studio; many studios sell these products for your convenience.

Also: Mild sea salt water rinses. Dissolve a pinch (1/4 teaspoon) non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt to one cup (8 oz.) warm to hot distilled or bottled water. (Avoid hot water for the first few days.) If you have high blood pressure or heart problems, you will need to eliminate the sea salt, and use only plain warm water rinses.

Rinse mouth for 30-60 seconds with solution (see Cleaning Solutions above) after meals during the entire minimum initial healing time. Do not use more than 4-5 times daily and use it over intervals spaced throughout the entire day.

Rinse mouth briefly (10-15 seconds) with the mild sea salt mixture (see recipe above) no more than twice a day. If you are cleaning too often, the top of your tongue will start to turn a white to yellowish color. Continue to clean your piercing, but reduce the number of times you are cleaning it per day.

A new soft bristled toothbrush should be used, to help minimize the introduction of bacteria into your mouth.

WHAT IS NORMAL

Swelling of the area is perfectly normal during the first part of healing an oral piercing. It can be greatly reduced by gently sucking (rather than chewing) on clean ice. Chipped or shaved ice, or small cubes are best. The majority of the swelling usually lasts for only 3-5 days.

Any new piercing can bleed off and on for a few days. There can also be some bleeding under the surface resulting in temporary bruising or discoloration. This is perfectly normal and not indicative of any complication.

Some tenderness or discomfort in the area of a new piercing is not unusual. You may feel aching, pinching, tightness or other unpleasant sensations off and on for several days or longer.

Don't be alarmed if you see a fairly liquid, yellowish secretion coming from the piercing. This is blood plasma, lymph and dead cells which is perfectly normal. All healing piercings secrete, it just looks different inside the mouth as it doesn't have a chance to dry and form a crust as it does on ear or body piercings. This is not pus, but indicates a healing piercing.

Plaque may form on tongue jewelry, commonly on the bottom ball and/or post. Scrub your barbell with a soft bristled toothbrush (gently during healing). If you are diligent with oral hygiene the jewelry will not need to be removed for cleaning, and it can usually be left in even for routine visits to the dentist.

Piercings may have a tendency to have a series of ups and downs during healing by seeming healed and then regressing. Try to be patient, and do keep cleaning during the entire initial healing time, even if the piercing seems healed sooner.

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

Once initial swelling is down, having your piercer replace the post portion of bar style jewelry with a shorter post may be wise. Jewelry which fits more closely is less likely to irritate your mouth or get between your teeth and be bitten.

If you like your piercing, leave jewelry in at all times. Even healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes after having been there for years! This varies from person to person, and even if your ear lobe piercings stay open without jewelry your oral piercing may not!

Keep following the care procedures during the entire minimum initial healing time, even if the piercing seems healed sooner.

WHAT TO DO

Try to sleep with your head propped up on pillows during the first few nights of healing; keeping your head above your heart will help to avoid much initial overnight swelling.

An over-the-counter, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.) taken according to package instructions can reduce discomfort, and it can also help to diminish swelling the first few days.

Check twice daily with clean hands to be sure the threaded ends on your jewelry are on tight. To clean hands, wash them carefully with liquid antibacterial soap. If your hands aren't freshly washed, don't touch yourself above the neck during the initial healing time.

Replace your toothbrush and make sure to keep it clean so that everything that goes into your mouth is hygienic while you are healing. A sensitive type of toothpaste may be less irritating to your mouth during healing than a usual, stronger variety.

Try to go slowly when you eat and to take small bites when you are getting used to your new jewelry. Cold foods and beverages feel great and can help diminish swelling. Drink plenty of liquids, especially bottled water.

Get enough sleep and eat a nutritious diet. The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.

WHAT TO AVOID

No oral sexual contact including French (wet) kissing or oral sex during the entire initial healing period, even if you are in a monogamous relationship. (If you had a large cut you would not allow anyone to spit into it! This is essentially the same thing.)

Avoid chewing on gum, tobacco, fingernails, pencils, sunglasses, etc., during healing. Don't share plates, cups or eating utensils. Reducing smoking or quitting is highly advisable when healing an oral piercing. Smoking increases risks and can lengthen the healing time. Avoid undue stress and recreational drug usage.

Stay away from aspirin, large amounts of caffeine, and alcoholic beverages for the first several days. Alcoholic beverages include all beer, wine and hard liquor. These can cause additional swelling, bleeding and discomfort. Refrain from eating spicy, salty, acidic, or hot temperature foods and beverages for a few days.

Do not play with the piercing for the initial healing time beyond the necessary movement for speaking and eating. The mouth withstands a lot of trauma from normal speaking and eating. Try to avoid other disturbances such as excessive talking, actively playing with the jewelry, or clicking the jewelry against your teeth. Undue stress on the piercing can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration and other complications.

Even after healing, excessive play with oral jewelry can result in permanent damage to teeth, gums, and oral structures. Metal is harder than the human body; be gentle.

Do not use Listerine or other mouthwash which contains alcohol. It can irritate the area and delay healing.

Don't use too many different products; select and use only one cleaning solution (such as Tech 2000 or Biotene) plus sea salt.

ORAL PIERCING HINTS AND TIPS

Some piercees will carry a spare ball in their wallet or purse. This is particularly advisable if you wear non-metallic balls such as acrylic, which is more fragile.

If you break or lose a ball, a small piece of clean pencil eraser can be press-fit onto the post as an emergency measure to keep the jewelry from coming out until a replacement can be obtained.

On barbells/labret studs you may change the ball portion of the jewelry at any time, but the original post should remain until initial swelling is down.

TONGUE:

Try to focus on keeping your tongue level in your mouth to avoid biting on the jewelry as you eat. Your mouth is likely to feel uncoordinated at first, but this will pass.

Try eating small bites of solid foods by placing food directly onto the molars with clean fingers or a fork. Food that is already in the back of the mouth doesn't have to get moved there by your tongue.

Gently brush your tongue and jewelry when you are healing. Once healed brush tongue and jewelry thoroughly to keep plaque away.

LIP / CHEEK:

Be cautious about opening your mouth wide when you eat, as this can result in the backing of the jewelry catching on your teeth. Take small bites and go slowly at first.

The outside of the piercing may become somewhat red or pink during healing and this is normal. Refer to the Aftercare Guidelines for Body and Facial Piercings sheet for instructions on how to care for the exterior surface of such a piercing.

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