

PIERCING AFTERCARE INSTRUCTIONS

Handle with care — do not touch unless cleaning.

Proper aftercare is what separates a well-healed piercing from a problematic one. Follow this guide carefully and contact us if anything looks off.

EXPECTED HEALING TIMES

Healing times vary significantly by placement. The table below reflects typical ranges. Your piercing may heal faster or slower depending on your body, lifestyle, and how consistently you follow aftercare.

Piercing Type	Initial Healing	Full Healing	Downsize at
Earlobe	6–8 weeks	3–6 months	8 weeks
Ear Cartilage	6–9 months	1–2 years	3–6 months
Nostril	4–6 months	6–12 months	3–4 months
Septum	6–8 weeks	6 months	8 weeks
Navel / Belly	6–9 months	1–2 years	6 months
Eyebrow / Surface	6–9 months	1–2 years	3 months

NOTE: A piercing is considered "healed" when it no longer produces discharge, feels tender, or shows redness. Do not assume it is healed just because time has passed — when in doubt, ask your piercer.

DAILY CARE PROTOCOL

Simple, consistent, and minimal. Over-cleaning is as harmful as under-cleaning — you are supporting a wound that wants to heal on its own.

Step-by-Step Cleaning Routine (2× daily)

Clean twice a day — morning and before bed. No more, no less.

HEADRUSH TATTOOS

- 1 Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately before touching or cleaning your piercing. Every time, no exceptions.
- 2 Rinse the piercing with saline wound wash (NeilMed or equivalent) or a sterile saline solution. Spray directly or apply with clean lint-free gauze — never cotton balls, which leave fibres behind.
- 3 Let the saline sit for 30–60 seconds to loosen any crust or discharge around the jewelry.
- 4 Gently wipe away any softened crust with clean lint-free gauze or a Q-tip. Do not pick or force anything off.
- 5 Rinse the area with clean water to remove any residue.
- 6 Pat dry with a fresh paper towel or clean gauze. Do not rub.
- 7 Apply a thin layer of aftercare ointment or saline spray to keep the site protected and help prevent infection.

Do not over-clean. Cleaning more than twice a day strips the natural oils your skin needs to heal and prolongs the process.

PRODUCTS TO NEVER USE ON A PIERCING

❑ DO NOT USE — THESE DAMAGE YOUR PIERCING

❑ Alcohol & Hydrogen Peroxide

Kill healthy cells, dry out and damage the tissue around your piercing, massively slow healing.

❑ Bacitracin & Polysporin

Cause allergic reactions, are comedogenic (clog pores), do not cleanse the wound, and interfere with new tissue formation.

❑ Bactine / Antiseptic sprays

Contain benzalkonium chloride — too harsh for open wounds, damages healing tissue.

❑ Soap directly on the wound

Use soap only to clean your hands before touching. Do not apply soap into the piercing channel.

REDNESS, PAIN & SWELLING — WHAT'S NORMAL

Clients must be advised on how to deal with slight redness, pain, or swelling. The following is what to expect and how to manage it:

What's Normal

- Redness and swelling around the piercing for the first 1–2 weeks. This is a normal inflammatory response.
- A small amount of clear or white–yellowish discharge (lymph fluid) that dries to a crust around the jewelry – completely normal, not infection.
- Mild soreness or tenderness when the area is touched, especially in the first week.
- Slight itching during the healing phase – do not scratch.

How to Manage It

- Keep cleaning 2× daily with saline. Consistent aftercare is the single most effective thing you can do.
- For swelling: a clean cold compress (not ice directly on skin) held gently over the area for a few minutes can reduce inflammation.
- For pain: Tylenol (acetaminophen) can be taken if needed. Avoid ibuprofen and aspirin – they thin the blood and can increase bleeding around a fresh piercing.
- Elevate if applicable – if a body piercing is swollen, keeping the area elevated when resting helps.
- Wear loose, soft clothing over body piercings. Friction is one of the leading causes of prolonged irritation.

IMPORTANT: If redness, pain, or swelling is increasing after the first week, or you develop a fever, consult a family physician within 24 hours. Do not wait.

DURING HEALING — WHAT TO AVOID

Physical

- Do not touch, twist, rotate, or move the jewelry – for the entire initial healing period (minimum 6–8 weeks, longer for cartilage).
- Do not sleep directly on a new ear piercing. Use a travel pillow or position yourself to keep pressure off it.
- Avoid tight clothing rubbing over body piercings.
- Do not pick off the crusty discharge – soak it off gently during cleaning.

Water & Environment

- No swimming in chlorinated pools, lakes, oceans, or hot tubs during initial healing. These introduce bacteria directly into an open wound.
- Showers are fine – let clean water rinse over the piercing.
- Avoid submerging the piercing in bath water.

Lifestyle

- Do not apply makeup, lotions, perfume, or hairspray near the piercing.
- Keep hair away from facial and ear piercings during healing – hair carries bacteria and oils.
- Avoid saunas, steam rooms, and tanning beds.

- No oral contact with the piercing site.
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JEWELRY & DOWNSIZING

Your initial jewelry is longer or larger than your final piece — this is intentional. It accommodates swelling. Once swelling subsides, you need to downsize.

- 1 Do not change jewelry for at least 6–8 weeks for lobes and septum, or 3–6 months for cartilage and body piercings. Changing early reopens the wound and resets healing.
- 2 Downsize at the appropriate time (see healing table above). Come back to the studio — we will swap to a shorter post that sits flush and reduces snagging and irritation.
- 3 After downsizing, continue aftercare until the piercing is fully healed. A shorter post does not mean you are done.
- 4 Material matters: use only implant-grade titanium (ASTM F136), implant-grade steel, solid 14k+ gold, or niobium. Avoid mystery metals, plated jewelry, and acrylic during healing.

Never attempt to change your own jewelry during initial healing. Come to the studio. Forcing jewelry through a partially healed channel causes tears, scarring, and sets healing back significantly.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS & SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

A well-cared-for piercing rarely develops serious complications. Know the difference between normal healing and a problem that needs attention.

Normal Healing vs. Irritation Bump

- Small, fluid-filled bumps near the piercing site are usually irritation bumps — caused by snagging, sleeping on the piercing, or incorrect jewelry fit.
- Fix the cause (change sleeping position, downsize jewelry, stop touching it) and the bump typically resolves on its own.
- Continue saline aftercare. Do not pick or puncture the bump.

Signs of Infection — See a Doctor Within 24 Hours If:

- The area is red, hot, swollen, and increasingly painful beyond the first week.
- You notice thick yellow-green pus (distinct from normal clear/white lymph discharge).

- You have a fever or feel generally unwell after getting pierced.
- The skin around the piercing is hard, warm to the touch, and tender.
- Redness is spreading visibly beyond the immediate piercing area.

If you suspect infection, do NOT remove the jewelry. Removing it traps the infection inside the closed channel. See a physician with the jewelry in place.

Other Possible Complications

- Keloid scarring — raised scar tissue beyond the piercing site. More common in certain skin types. Contact us if you notice unusual scar formation.
- Migration or rejection — the body slowly pushes surface piercings out. Signs: jewelry sitting closer to the skin surface, thinning tissue above the jewelry. See your piercer promptly.
- Allergic reaction to jewelry — persistent widespread redness and rash rather than localized. Switch to implant-grade titanium and consult a physician if symptoms persist.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

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Saline Spray (NeilMed Wound Wash or similar) • Available at our studio
Spectro Gel face wash (for dry or sensitive skin)

Use saline wound wash as your primary cleaning solution. A thin layer of a natural, fragrance-free ointment (such as our Headrush Healing Gel) may be applied after cleaning to help prevent infection and keep the site protected.

NEVER USE: Bacitracin, Polysporin, Neosporin, hydrogen peroxide, rubbing alcohol, Bactine, or any antiseptic not specifically formulated for piercings.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I clean my piercing in the shower?

Yes — letting clean water flow over the piercing in the shower is fine and even helpful. Just don't use soap or shampoo directly on it.

The crust keeps coming back. Is that a problem?

No. Lymph fluid dries to a crust as a normal part of healing. It will keep appearing until the piercing is fully healed. Soak it off gently during cleanings — never pick.

My piercing looks fine. Can I stop cleaning it early?

No. Continue twice-daily cleaning until the piercing is fully healed, not just symptom-free. Stopping early is one of the leading causes of late-stage complications.

Can I swim at all?

Not in pools, lakes, or oceans during initial healing. If you must, cover the piercing with a waterproof bandage and clean thoroughly afterward — but avoidance is strongly preferred.

My jewelry is too tight / getting embedded. What do I do?

Contact us immediately. Do not attempt to remove it yourself. Embedded jewelry requires professional attention.

I snagged my piercing. What now?

Clean it with saline, don't panic. Minor snagging is common. If there is significant tearing, bleeding that doesn't stop, or the jewelry has been pulled through, come to the studio or see a physician.

When can I change to a hoop or a different style?

Only after the piercing is fully healed — not just initially healed. For most cartilage piercings that means 12+ months. Come to the studio and we'll assess it properly.

QUESTIONS?

Contact us before doing anything you're unsure about.
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