

ALTERNATIVE AFTERCARE

- Aftercare is an evolving conversation in the progression of body piercing. Aftercare needs can differ from one region and climate to another and not all products are widely available, discuss your specific needs with your body piercer. If you choose to use soap on a healing piercing consider using a gentle soap free from harsh chemicals, dyes, and perfumes. The use of an antibacterial soap is not suggested as it may over-dry and irritate your piercing. If your piercer suggests the use of a soap fully rinse away product after use.
- If sterile saline is not available in your region a sea salt solution mixture can be a viable alternative. Dissolve 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon (.75 to 1.42 grams) of non-iodized (iodine free), fine grain sea salt into one cup (8 oz. / 250ml) of warm distilled or bottled water. A stronger mixture is not better; salt solution that is too strong can irritate the piercing.

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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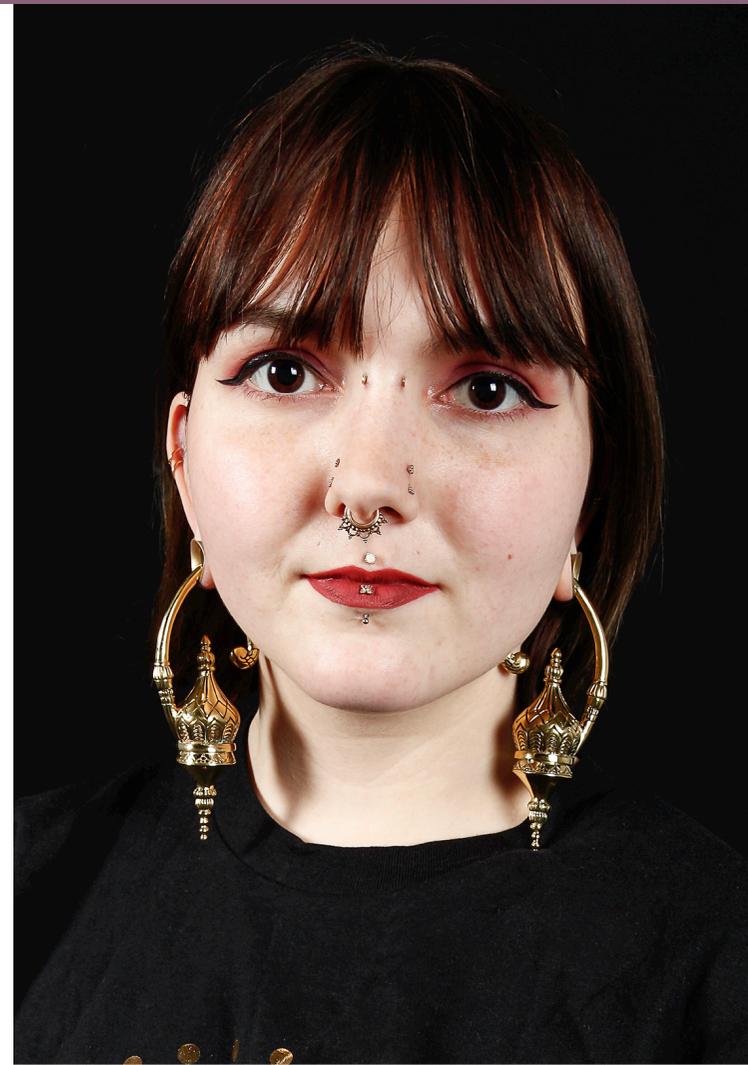
***Disclaimer:** These guidelines are based on a combination of vast professional experience, common sense, research, and extensive clinical practice. This is not to be considered a substitute for medical advice from a doctor. If you suspect an infection, seek medical attention. Be aware that many doctors 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*.

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English - 2021 Edition



SUGGESTED AFTERCARE GUIDELINES FOR ORAL PIERCINGS



CLEANING SOLUTIONS

Use one or more of the following solutions for inside the mouth:

- Alcohol-free and hydrogen peroxide-free mouth rinse. Or you can use dry mouth oral rinse for hydration.
- Plain clean water. Bottled or filtered water is preferred.
- Packaged sterile saline solution with no additives (read the label). This is not for internal use but external use only (like cleaning the outside of your lip piercing).
- Regardless of the brand of saline, the can should list sterile and isotonic. The only ingredients included should be water and 0.9% or 9mg/ml sodium chloride. Mixing your own sea salt solution is no longer a suggested practice from the APP. Mixing your own sea salt solution will commonly result in the product being far too salty and strong. This can over dry the piercing and interfere with healing.
- **Do not use contact solution, eye drops, or nasal rinse products on your piercing.**

CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS

INTERNAL:

- Wash your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- Keeping good oral hygiene practices is important in maintaining a healthy mouth and piercing. You will want to floss, brush and use mouth rinse at least twice a day. It is vital to not overuse the mouth rinse.
- Gently brush the jewelry with a clean toothbrush regularly to avoid plaque build up.
- Rinse with water (bottled or filtered) thoroughly after every time you eat, drink or smoke.

EXTERNAL:

- Wash your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- Be sure to rinse your piercing thoroughly with warm water in the shower once a day. Then rinse with saline twice a day.
- Gently remove any discharge or crust that may have built up on your jewelry, then dry the area carefully with gauze.

WHAT IS NORMAL?

- For the first three to five days you may experience swelling, light bleeding, bruising, tenderness, and/or a whitish to yellowish secretion that may form crust on the jewelry.
- After the first week, you may still continue to experience some minor swelling and secretion.
- A piercing might seem healed before the healing process is complete. This is because piercings heal from the outside in. Although it feels fine, the tissue remains fragile on the inside. Be patient, and keep cleaning throughout the entire healing period.

- For lip piercings, it is typical for the jewelry to “nest” slightly into the lip (on the inside) once it is healed.
- Even healed piercings that you have had for years can shrink or close within a few hours if the jewelry is removed. This varies from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in! Do not leave the hole empty for a long period of time.

WHAT TO DO TO HELP REDUCE SWELLING

- Cold water rinses may help reduce swelling.
- Reduce movement of the area and don't play with your jewelry.
- Sleep with your head elevated above your heart during the first few nights.
- If you feel the skin is actually growing over the jewelry (inside or outside), visit your piercer immediately for a longer bar to avoid embedded jewelry.

MAINTAIN GOOD ORAL HYGIENE

- Maintain ADA home oral care recommendations - oral hygiene routine of flossing, brushing your teeth and using mouth rinse twice a day.
- Once healed, gently brush the jewelry with a clean toothbrush regularly to avoid plaque build up.

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 diet¹ or consider taking nutritional supplements daily.
- Avoid emotional stress, which can increase healing times by up to 40%.²

ORAL PIERCING TIPS

- Sleep with your head elevated in the beginning to minimize overnight swelling.
- Once the swelling has subsided, it is vital to replace the original, longer jewelry with a shorter post or barbell to avoid damage to the teeth and gums.
- Because this necessary jewelry change often occurs during healing, it should be done by a qualified piercer. This information should have been given to you during the piercing. If not, consult with a professional piercer about your downsize.

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/>

- With clean hands or paper products, be sure to regularly check threaded ends on your jewelry for tightness. For threadless jewelry make sure there is no gap between the post (inside) to the top (outside). In case of a gap, place your index finger and thumb on both sides of the jewelry and press them together. Be sure to check that the gap is closed
- Contact your piercer for a non-metallic jewelry alternative if your metal jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure). See the APP brochure **Preparing for Medical and Dental Procedures** for more information.

- Should you decide you no longer want the piercing, simply remove the jewelry or have a professional piercer remove it and continue cleaning the area until the hole closes. In most cases, only a small mark will remain.

EATING:

- Take your time with eating until you are used to the piercing and the jewelry is downsized to prevent irritation or prolonged healing.
- Avoid eating spicy, salty, acidic, or hot temperature foods or beverages for the first two weeks (no specific foods need to be avoided).
- Cold foods and beverages can be soothing and help reduce swelling.
- For labret (cheek and lip) piercings: be cautious about opening your mouth too wide as this can result in the jewelry catching on your teeth.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not play with your jewelry. Long term effects include permanent damage to teeth and gums. See the APP's brochure **Oral Piercing Risks and Safety Measures** for more information.
- Avoid undue trauma; excessive talking or playing with the jewelry can cause scar tissue, migration, and other complications.
- Avoid using mouthwash containing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide. It can irritate the piercing and delay healing.
- Avoid oral sexual contact including wet kissing or oral sex during healing.
- Avoid chewing on tobacco, gum, fingernails, pencils, sunglasses, and other foreign objects that could harbor bacteria.
- Avoid sharing plates, cups, and eating utensils.
- Avoid using straws. Straw use can increase the risk of swelling and bleeding.
- Minimize the intake of smoking and vaping (tobacco or cannabis). It increases risks and prolongs healing time.
- Avoid aspirin, alcohol, and large amounts of caffeine as long as you are experiencing bleeding or swelling.
- Avoid submerging healing piercings in bodies of water such as lakes, pools, oceans, and even the bathtub.
- Each body is unique and healing times vary considerably. If you have any questions, please contact a professional piercer.