

**Albany County Department of Health
Division of Environmental Health**

Guidelines for Piercing Aftercare Sheet

The following guidelines are designed to assist in the development of aftercare sheets for each individual establishment. The items suggested are not all-inclusive and are meant to provide direction towards developing aftercare practices and informational sheets.

- **Healing time** Ear, nostril, and septum piercings require approximately a two-month healing period. All other piercings require at least six months to be fully healed.
- **Exposure to bodily fluids** Until piercing is fully healed; avoid contact with bodily fluids of others (saliva, blood, semen, vaginal fluid). If exchange of bodily fluids is unavoidable, the use of latex barriers is strongly advised.
- **Tongue piercing** Immediately apply ice after piercing to control swelling. To prevent infection, avoid oral contact with others that involves the exchange of bodily fluids for at least six weeks.
- Remember to check piercing periodically to make sure jewelry is fastened. Tighten daily.
- Never rotate or play with your piercing when it is dry.
- Avoid swimming in unchlorinated bodies of water. Lakes, ponds, rivers, oceans and other natural bodies of water contain organisms that may infect an unhealed piercing. Chlorinated bodies of water can also contain organisms that can harm a new piercing.
- Avoid tight-fitting clothing that will irritate the piercing. Clean cotton clothing is recommended.
- Avoid use of artificial lubricants, oils, powders, or petroleum products, as they can interfere with the healing process.
- Protect eyebrow, ear, and nostril piercings during haircuts, as hair can be deposited in a new piercing and lead to infection.

Cleaning

- Touch piercings only with very clean hands.
- New piercings should be cleaned thoroughly twice a day.
- **Lip, tongue, cheek piercings** – Rinse with antiseptic mouthwash after eating or drinking. Use a carbamide peroxide solution (e.g., Gly-oxide or Peroxil) two or three times per day, followed by an antiseptic mouthwash. Wash outside of lip or labret piercings with a sterile gauze and antiseptic mouthwash.
- **All other piercings** should be washed with an anti-bacterial soap and cleaned with a pierced ear cleaning solution. For below-the-neck piercings, Betadine solution is recommended. If Betadine causes irritation, discontinue use.
- Soak any dried matter off jewelry before turning it into the piercing.
- **Use of antibacterial ointments** – Antibiotic ointments can be used if an infection becomes apparent. Use of antibacterial ointment should be limited to ten days. If irritation or infection persists, consult your physician.
- **Discouraged** - Hydrogen peroxide, witch hazel and alcohol are not recommended, as they are too harsh and may interfere with the healing process.

In case of infection

- If an itchy redness or a rash or a clear discharge occurs, you may be allergic to the jewelry or cleaning agent. Try changing agent or jewelry. Do not switch cleaning agents too often.
- If the piercing is sore, red and oozing pus, it is infected and you should consult a physician. In the case of infection of a nostril or septum piercing, it is imperative to see a physician without delay since infections of the septum and nostril may be extremely serious.
- Do not remove the jewelry before consulting with a physician, since removal of the jewelry can cause infectious secretions to be trapped inside the body.
- If a painful lump develops, contact a physician.
- Notify the Albany County Department of Health at (518) 447-4620 if an infection occurs.

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Guidelines For Tattoo Aftercare Instructions

- Keep tattoo covered for at least one hour, and no longer than eight hours.
- After removing bandage, wash tattoo and surrounding area with water and mild soap.
- If bandage sticks to your tattoo, soak it in cool water until it falls off.
- Rinse away all surface blood, plasma, ointment, and remaining soap.
- Always blot dry (i.e., do not rub) until tattoo is completely healed.
- Do not rebandage the tattoo.
- Do not apply petroleum jelly.
- Do not apply alcohol, peroxide, or betadine.
- Do not rub, pick, or scratch your tattoo.
- Pat tattoo dry with a clean towel and apply a very thin layer of antibiotic ointment. Do this 3 to 4 times daily.
- Rub the antibiotic ointment in until it is dry.
- If ointment looks wet or greasy, pat dry with a paper towel.
- After 3 days, switch to a high-quality fragrance-free hand lotion. Do not overuse ointment. Keep skin moist, not wet.
- If a rash occurs or tattoo stays very sensitive, discontinue lotion, let tattoo dry out, and wash with an antibacterial soap and water 3 times per day.
- Do not expose to direct sunlight for two weeks.
- Do not swim in pools, lakes, rivers, etc. for ten days.
- Do not soak in tub or sauna for ten days.

In the event of an infection or illness associated with the tattoo, consult with your physician and please notify the Albany County Department of Health at (518) 447-4620.