

## **AFTER-CARE and CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS FOR BODY PIERCINGS**

### **LOOKING AFTER YOUR PIERCING**

- Wash your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- Saline soak for five to ten minutes once or more per day. Invert a cup of warm saline solution over the area to form a vacuum. For certain piercings it may be easier to apply using clean gauze or paper towels saturated with saline solution.
- A brief rinse afterward will remove any residue.
- As for the sea salt solution, dissolve 1/4 of a teaspoon of sea salt into one cup of warm to hot water in a disposable cup. Do not make the solution any stronger than this as it can burn the new piercing. ¼ of a tea spoon is fine as any less is too weak and any more can be too strong.
- Soap no more than once or twice a day. You can preferably use a neutral PH soap. While showering, lather up a pearl size drop of the soap to clean the jewellery and the piercing. Leave the cleanser on the piercing no more than thirty seconds, then rinse thoroughly to remove all traces of the soap from the piercing.
- It is not necessary to rotate the jewellery through the piercing.
- Dry by gently patting with clean, disposable paper products. Cloth towels can harbour bacteria and snag on jewellery, causing injury.

### **WHAT IS NORMAL?**

- Initially: some bleeding, localized swelling, tenderness, or bruising.
- During healing: some discoloration, itching, secretion of a whitish-yellow fluid (not pus) that will form some crust on the jewellery. The tissue may tighten around the jewellery as it heals.
- Once healed: the jewellery may not move freely in the piercing; do not force it. If you fail to include cleaning your piercing as a part of your daily hygiene routine, normal but smelly bodily secretions may accumulate.
- A piercing may seem healed before the healing process is complete. This is because they heal from the outside in, and although it feels fine, the tissue remains fragile on the inside. Be patient, and keep cleaning throughout the entire healing period.

- Even healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes after having been there for years! This varies from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewellery in—do not remove it. Re-insertion can be difficult or impossible.

### **WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?**

- Wash your hands prior to touching the piercing; leave it alone except when cleaning. During healing, it is not necessary to rotate your jewellery.
- 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 bedding is washed and changed regularly. Wear clean, comfortable, breathable clothing that protects your piercing while you are sleeping.
- Showers tend to be safer than taking baths, as bathtubs can harbour bacteria. If you bathe in a tub, clean it well before each use and rinse off your piercing when you get out.

### **WHAT TO AVOID**

- Avoid cleaning with Betadine®, Hibiclens®, alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, Dial® or other harsh soaps, as these can damage cells. Also avoid ointments as they prevent necessary air circulation.
- Avoid Bactine®, pierced ear care solutions and other products containing Benzalkonium Chloride (BZK) and Benzethonium Chloride (BZT). These can be irritating and are not intended for long-term wound care.
- Avoid over-cleaning. This can delay your healing and irritate your piercing.
- Avoid undue trauma such as friction from clothing, excessive motion of the area, playing with the jewellery, and vigorous cleaning. These activities can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration, prolonged healing, and other complications.
- Avoid all oral contact, rough play, and contact with others' bodily fluids on or near your piercing during healing.
- Avoid stress and recreational drug use, including excessive caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.

- 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 jewellery until the piercing is fully healed.

## **OTHER HINTS AND TIPS**

### **Jewellery**

- Unless there is a problem with the size, style, or material of the initial jewellery, leave it in place for the entire healing period. See a qualified piercer to perform any jewellery change that becomes necessary during healing.
- Contact your piercer if your jewellery must be removed (such as for a medical procedure). There are non-metallic jewellery alternatives available.
- Leave jewellery in at all times. Even old or well-healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes—even after having been there for years. If removed, with clean hands or paper product, be sure to regularly check threaded ends on your jewellery for tightness.
- Should you decide you no longer want the piercing, simply or have a professional piercer remove it) and continue cleaning the piercing until the hole closes. In most cases only a small mark will remain.
- In the event an infection is suspected, quality jewellery or an inert alternative should be left in place to allow for drainage of the infection. If the jewellery is removed, the surface cells can close up, which can seal the infection inside the piercing channel and result in an abscess. Do not remove jewellery unless instructed to by a medical professional.

## **FOR PARTICULAR BODY AREAS**

### **Navel**

- A hard, vented eye patch (sold at pharmacies) can be applied under tight clothing (such as nylon stockings). This can protect the area from restrictive clothing, excess irritation, and impact during physical activities such as contact sports.

### **Ear/Ear Cartilage and Facial**

- Use the t-shirt trick: Dress your pillow in a large, clean t-shirt and turn it nightly.
- Maintain cleanliness of telephones, headphones, eyeglasses, helmets, hats, and anything that contacts the pierced area.
- Use caution when styling your hair and advise your stylist of a new or healing piercing.

## **Nipples**

- The support of a tight cotton shirt or sports bra may provide protection and feel comfortable, especially for sleeping.

## **Genital**

- Genital piercings—especially Prince Alberts, Ampallangs, and Apadravyas—can bleed freely for the first few days. Be prepared.
- Urinate after using soap to clean any piercing that is near the urethra.
- Wash your hands before touching on (or near) a healing piercing.
- In most cases you can engage in sexual activity as soon as you feel ready, but maintaining hygiene and avoiding trauma are vital; all sexual activities should be gentle during the healing period.
- To increase comfort and decrease trauma, soak in warm saline solution or plain water to remove any crusty matter prior to sexual activity.
- Use barriers such as condoms, dental dams, and waterproof bandages, etc. to avoid contact with your partners' body fluids, even in monogamous relationships.
- Use clean, disposable barriers on sex toys.
- Use a new container of water-based lubricant; do not use saliva.
- After sex, an additional saline soak or clean water rinse is suggested.
- Each body is unique and healing times vary considerably. If you have any questions, please contact your piercer.

## **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.**