**Roadhouse Tattoos & Body Piercings**

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**Suggested Aftercare Guidelines for Body Piercings**

**Cleaning Solutions**

Use the following solutions for healing piercings:

* Non-iodized fine grain sea salt (For saline soaks)
* Distilled Water
* A mild, fragrance-free liquid soap—preferably anti-microbial or germicidal such as Provon or Satin (To be used when showering)

Recommended alongside saline soak:

* Sterile Saline solution (Wound/Piercing Spray) I.e. Simply Saline Wound Wash, SteriWash, H2Ocean Saline Spray, NeilMed NeilCleanse Spray. (If you have high blood pressure or a heart condition, please check with your doctor before using a saline product as your primary cleaning solution.)

**The Recipe**

If you are making your own saline solution, the proper ratio is 1/4 teaspoon (not table-spoon) of fine-grain, non-iodized sea salt to 1 cup (8 fluid ounces/250 ml) of clean warm water. The correct proportions are critical. If the solution is too strong (hypertonic, or containing more salt than your blood), it can irritate your skin. If your soaks cause your skin to become dry, use a mixture of 1/8 teaspoon sea salt per cup of water. Premixing a large batch may be convenient, but it is safest to make a fresh solution every time you soak, as a stored supply can become contaminated.

**How To Soak**

Pour normal saline into a clean container and warm it in a microwave or mix up the sea salt with warm water. The solution should be the temperature of a drinkable hot beverage. Distilled water is best, and bottled water is a second choice; depending on your local water quality, you may need to avoid tap water unless it is filtered or first brought to a full boil for a minute or longer and then allowed to cool sufficiently before use. Even if you believe your water supply is clean, should you experience difficulty healing, use cleaner water for your saline soaks and final rinses.

Soak your piercing in saline solution for five minutes at least once or twice daily, optimally prior to showering (which will rinse away the salt crystals and piercing secretions).

If you’re not on your way to the shower, follow your saline treatment with a thorough clear water rinse to remove any residue and debris from the wound, as dried salt crystals and piercing crusties are sharp and can cause damage. Dry with clean paper products. Cotton swabs or sterile gauze squares are helpful for drying ears, navels, and other spots that have nooks and crannies. They can also be used to remove any stubborn matter that remains following a soak.

Depending on the location of your piercing, a mug, glass, or shallow bowl can be an appropriate soaking vessel. A cup or shot glass is perfect for a navel or nipple piercing. Just lean forward and seal the container of solution over the area to create a vacuum. Keep a clean cloth or paper towel handy in case of leaks. For an ear piercing, use a small cup or lay your ear inside a shallow bowl. A mug or small bowl can be used for soaking a genital piercing, depending on its placement. Saturate a sterile gauze pad in saline solution to form a small compress for hard-to-soak spots. Disposable cups are a safe (if not environmentally friendly) option; you can also use clean kitchenware. Before use, clean reusable soaking containers in hot soapy water or in a dishwasher.

Depending on the location of the piercing, the soaking process can be challenging or awkward. Hanging around with your ear in a bowl isn’t especially comfy. The process can be time-consuming and seem like more trouble than it’s worth. Still, keeping up with soaks for at least the first few weeks will give your piercing maximum support during the early healing stages.

As your healing progresses, you can try reducing the frequency to once a day or even less. Of course, any time a piercing has a flare-up, you accidentally injure it, or it is aggravated by a stretch, go back to regular saline soaks. Following such a setback, treat your piercing like it is new by following all the guidelines above.

A good time to do an extra soak is before physical labor, sports, or other movement. This is especially helpful for torso and genital piercings. Crust on your jewelry can get worked into the piercing as you move, causing discomfort and damage. After intense physical activity, you may want to do another saline soak or perform one of your daily cleanings—or at least give your piercing a clear water rinse.

When you aren’t able to soak, you may want to use a saline spray that is formulated for use on piercings. Products such as H2Ocean Piercing Spray or Simply Saline Wound Wash are the perfect products to use in between soaks to optimize your healing time.

**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 jewelry. The tissue may tighten around the jewelry as it heals.

 • Once healed: the jewelry may not move freely in the piercing; do not force it. If you fail to include cleaning your piercing as 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 tissue heals from the outside in, and although it feels fine, the interior remains fragile. 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 jewelry in—do not leave it empty.

**WHAT TO DO**

• Wash your hands prior to touching the piercing; leave it alone except when cleaning. During healing, it is not necessary to rotate your jewelry.

 • 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 harbor 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 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). 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 jewelry, 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 submerging the piercing in unhygienic bodies of water such as lakes, pools, hot tubs, etc. Or, protect your piercing using a waterproof wound-sealant bandage (such as 3M™ Nexcare™ Clean Seals). These are available at most drugstores.

 • 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 jewelry until the piercing is fully healed.

**HINTS AND TIPS**

JEWELRY:

 • Unless there is a problem with the size, styles, or material of the initial jewelry, leave it in the place for the entire healing period. See a qualified piercer to perform any jewelry change that becomes necessary during healing

. • Contact your piercer if your jewelry must be removed (such as for a medical procedure). There are non-metallic jewelry alternatives available.

 • Leave jewelry in at all times. Even old or well-healed piercing can shrink or close in minutes even after having been there for years. If removed, re-insertion can be difficult or impossible.

• With clean hands or paper product, be sure to regularly check threaded ends on your jewelry for tightness. ("Righty-tighty, lefty-loosey.")

 • Carry a clean spare ball in case of loss or breakage.

• Should you decide you no longer want the piercing, simply remove the jewelry (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 jewelry or an inert alternative should be left in place to allow for drainage or the infection. If the jewelry 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 jewelry unless instructed to by a medical professional.

**FOR PARTICULAR AREAS**

**NAVEL:**

 • 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:**

• Use the t-shirt trick: Dress your pillow in a large, clean t-shirt and turn it nightly; one clean t-shirt provides four clean surfaces for sleeping.

 • 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.

**JEWELRY:**

Once your piercing is healed it is best to use the following metals to avoid irritation or an allergic reaction:

* ASTM F-138 stainless steel
* ASTM F-136 titanium
* Niobium
* 14k Gold

Having a piercing on your body is a unique and personal experience.

Every piercing can vary depending on the body part, your body’s healing process and how you take care of it after. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your new piercing, *always* feel comfortable asking your piercer for general information.