



Healthcare Standards 
Directorate

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**Client Advice for the Care of Tattoos &
Body Piercing**



Client advice for the care of a tattoo

The client should be given verbal and written instructions on how to care for their tattoo. No adverts for products should be made. The following information should be included in the aftercare document.

Good practice is to cover the tattooed area with sterile, medical grade, non-adhesive gauze which is then secured with hypo-allergenic tape. Gauze permits ventilation and aids healing.

If a plastic film wrap is used for larger areas then it must be medically graded and clean (taken directly from the pack). The client should be advised on when and how to replace this covering dressing.

Remove the sterile bandage in 3-5 hours and wash the area with cool, soapy water.

Gently pat the area dry with a clean towel.

Do not rub the skin.

Do not cover the tattoo with a bandage.

A suitable anti-bacterial skin cleanser may be used on the area of the skin where the tattoo has been applied. This can also be used on the tattoo during the tattooing procedure.

Apply anti-bacterial lotions and skin care products to the tattooed area of the skin, if necessary.

It is normal for the tattoo to peel for a short while. This is just the old skin and some bits of excess ink. The tattoo will be fine once it heals.

Protect the tattoo from direct sunlight. Use a sun block with a rating of "SPF 40" or stronger.

Avoid swimming for two weeks.

Do not drink alcohol for twenty-four hours following the tattoo. If signs of infection (pus, redness, and swelling) or increased bleeding at the site of the tattoo are noticed, the doctor should be contacted immediately.

Client advice for the care of body piercing

The client should be given verbal and written instructions on how to care for their piercing. No adverts for products should be made. The following information should be included in the aftercare document.

Clients should be advised:

- To wash their hands before touching the piercing/s
- To keep the piercing site/s clean and dry to promote healing
- To never allow oral contact with the fresh piercing/s
- Not to wear tight clothing over the piercing/s
- Not to go swimming until the piercing/s have healed
- To wear clean cotton underwear until genital piercing/s have healed

In general piercings should be handled as little as possible but to maintain mobility of the jewellery they should be turned no more frequently than once/twice a day with clean hands.

The affected area may be tender, itchy, and slightly red or bruised for a few weeks. It may bleed a little for the first few days. Healing times will vary depending on the piercing site and may not heal for several months (e.g. naval piercings can take up to eight months).

It may also secrete a whitish-yellow fluid (plasma) which crusts on the jewellery; this is not pus. Encrustations (scabs) should not be removed as they help to protect the site against infection.

The skin may tighten around the jewellery as it heals, making turning somewhat difficult.

Allow natural healing to take place without the introduction of antibacterial agents or antiseptics. After showering or bathing, dry the piercing using cotton swabs/tissue.

Maintaining a good level of hygiene around the treated area is essential during the healing period.

If signs of infection (pus, redness, and swelling) or increased bleeding at the site of the piercing are noticed, the doctor should be contacted immediately.

Signs and symptoms of an infection

If any of the following signs or symptoms of an infection develop, urgent medical attention should be sought:

- Redness spreading around the site and extending away from it
- Pus or green/yellow fluid oozing from the site
- Bleeding that isn't controlled by a light pressure
- Pain (rather than discomfort)
- Swelling
- Heat
- Immobility of, or reluctance to move, a limb/digit/part of the body