

**What is Normal:**

Bleeding, bruising, discoloration and/or swelling are not uncommon. Any break in the skin, including a new piercing can bleed or bruise. These are not indications of any complication. Reduce intake of aspirin, alcohol, and caffeine. For above-the-neck piercings try sleeping with your head elevated above your heart (prop up on some pillows) to limit overnight swelling. Studies show non-steroidal anti-inflammatory products such as Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.) can help minimize swelling.

Some tenderness or discomfort in the area of a new piercing is not unusual. You may feel stinging, burning, aching or other unpleasant sensations off and on for several days or longer. During healing there may be some itching.

Secretion of a fluid which contains blood plasma, lymph and dead cells is perfectly normal. It is fairly liquid, whitish-yellow in color and forms a crust on the jewelry at the openings of the piercing. This is not pus, but indicates a healing piercing.

Once healed your piercing may secrete a semi-solid white malodorous substance from the oil glands called sebum. This is not pus, but indicates a healed piercing.

Piercings may have a tendency to have a series of "ups and downs" during healing by seeming healed and then regressing. Try to be patient, and do keep cleaning during the entire initial healing time, even if the piercing seems healed sooner.

Tightness is normal. Do not expect jewelry to swing freely in most body piercings, even after they are thoroughly healed.

**What Do I Do?**

Wash your hands prior to contact on or near the area of your healing piercing! Leave the piercing alone except for when you are cleaning it. It is not necessary or advisable to rotate the ring while healing except during cleanings.

Leave the starter jewelry in during the entire minimum initial healing time! (Assuming your initial jewelry is appropriate in terms of metal content, style, and size. Inappropriate jewelry should be changed out by a professional.) Those with captive-style rings or barbells (straight, bent, or circular) can change the bead/ball portion of the jewelry at any time. Check twice daily with clean hands to make sure the balls are screwed on tight on threaded jewelry such as barbells. Both balls tighten to the right.

If you like your piercing, leave jewelry in at all times. Even old, well-healed piercings can shrink or close in minutes after having been there for years! This varies from person to person, and even if your ear lobe piercings stay open without jewelry, your body piercing may not! Contact your piercer if your jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure). Monofilament nylon or another inert non-metallic substance may be able to be inserted to maintain the piercing until jewelry can be reinserted.

Make sure your bedding is clean and changed frequently while you are healing, especially if pets get into your bed.

Wear clean, comfortable, breathable fabric clothing in the area of a body piercing.

A multi-vitamin mineral supplement containing zinc and vitamin C may help boost your body's healing abilities. Take it with your morning meal according to package instructions.

Get enough sleep, eat a nutritious diet, and avoid undue stress, recreational drugs, and alcohol consumption. The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.

Showering is safer than taking a bath, as bath tubs tend to harbor bacteria. To bathe safely, clean your tub with a bleach product before each bath, and rinse the tub before you fill it. Also, be sure to do a running water rinse on your piercing when you are done in the tub.

Mild sea salt water soaks are suggested at least once a day to accelerate healing and increase your comfort. This may also help to reduce irritation in the area. Dissolve a pinch (1/4 teaspoon) of sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of warm or hot water in a clean cup. Distilled water is optimal. A stronger solution is not better as you can burn your piercing with too much salt. Invert it over the area to form a vacuum and soak directly for a few minutes. For certain placements it is easier to use a clean cotton ball or gauze

pad soaked in the salt water and applied to the pierced area. Follow with a clear water rinse or splash then pat dry with paper products.

Rejection of jewelry is a fairly common occurrence. You will notice that the amount of skin pierced seems to be getting smaller and the jewelry is being pushed to the surface. You should remove the jewelry before it breaks through the surface of the skin to prevent scarring. Often the area can be re-pierced after it has thoroughly healed.

In the event that the piercing drains a thick pus discharge instead of the normal liquid secretion, you may wish to see a physician for evaluation and possible antibiotic treatment. If you do have an infection, the jewelry should be left in the piercing to allow for drainage of pus. If the jewelry is removed, the holes can close up, resulting in an abscess. **LEAVE YOUR JEWELRY IN!**