



BODY CULTURE PIERCING

AFTERCARE GUIDE

> WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE EARLY STAGES OF A HEALING PIERCING:

During the first few weeks of healing, it is likely that you will experience the following:

- Localised swelling
- Localised pain and tenderness
- Discharge of a clear or cloudy fluid (serous secretion)
- Bruising and bleeding

Discharge of a clear or cloudy fluid may persist for several months with slow healing piercings. These symptoms are very normal, you may experience none, some or all to a degree and still have a very healthy piercing. Piercings may appear or feel healed before the healing process is complete.

DO NOT TOUCH, PICK, TWIST OR APPLY COSMETICS TO YOUR PIERCING.

Please read this page carefully and follow the cleaning instructions listed as advised.

> WHAT SHOULD I BE CLEANING MY PIERCING WITH ?:

You should be cleaning your piercing with **STERILE SALINE**.

Sterile 0.9% saline is an isotonic pH balanced solution, this means it neither over-hydrates or dehydrates your skin. This causes minimum disruption to the wound healing process while gently removing foreign substances and exudate from the piercing site.

This is why it is so important to **NOT** use soaps, oils, alcohol based products, or non-sterile saline to clean your piercing- these are not isotonic and will cause disruption to the healing process.

We recommend using **Neilmed Piercing Aftercare**, this is an isotonic, chemical & preservative-free sterile saline spray. It is packaged in a pressurised can meaning it will remain sterile for years to come.



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Showering is also an excellent way to clean your piercing. The constant stream of clean, warm water will help remove dry exudate (the waste material that discharges from your piercing). **Do not use** a loofah, shower pouf or face cloth on or around your piercing in case of snagging- these also harbour bacteria.

> HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BE CLEANING MY PIERCING?:

Piercings should only be cleaned with sterile saline **no more than 2-3 times per day**. This is best to do after showering as it will soften the exudate making it easier for the sterile saline to gently flush it away.

Over-cleaning will cause disruption to wound healing whereas under-cleaning may cause infection.

> HOW DO I CLEAN MY PIERCING?:

It is important to always wash your hands before and after you clean your piercing to prevent the spread of infection. Not doing so will transfer harmful bacteria onto your piercing as you are cleaning it. Hold your canister of sterile saline 1-2 centimetres away from the piercing. Concentrate the flow at the piercing exit wounds at the front and the back, this will only take seconds to rinse the piercing.

DO NOT REMOVE YOUR JEWELLERY AND DO NOT TWIST YOUR PIERCING - this disrupts the formation of new skin cells, delaying healing and potentially causing a bump.

***TIP:** Saturating the end of a cotton tip or cotton pad with sterile saline can be useful for more precise cleaning. This must be done gently to avoid moving the jewellery too much and only ever following rinsing in the shower.*

> HOW DO I DRY MY PIERCING?:

As soon as your piercing has been cleaned (whether with sterile saline or in the shower) it is important to gently dry the skin. This can be done using a hairdryer switched to the cool setting or using lint free gauze- which is inexpensive and won't leave bits of cotton fluff at the wound site. If this is not available to you, disposable kitchen paper towel will suffice.>

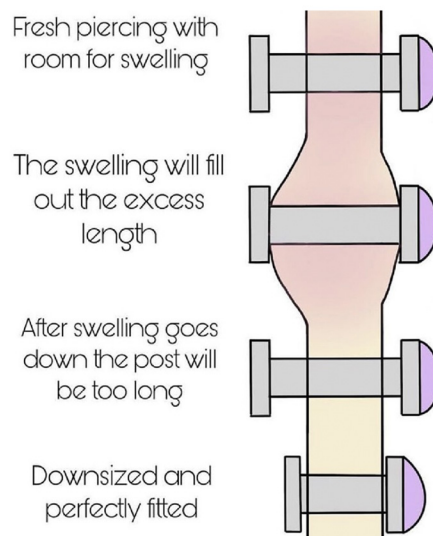


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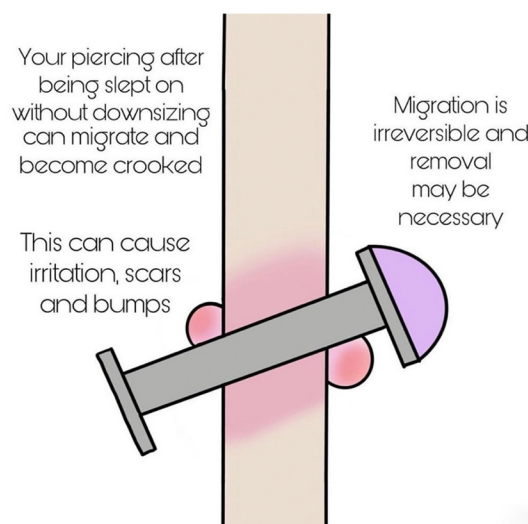
> DOWNSIZING:

Some piercings will need to be downsized after a few weeks (4-6 weeks in most cases). Initial piercings are often performed with a slightly longer bar so the tissue has room to swell.



Once the swelling has subsided, you must return to the studio to have a shorter bar fitted so your piercing can continue to heal well. Failure on your part to do this can result in lumps, bumps and migration that may not be fixable.

Downsizing doesn't happen on a set date as we all heal at our own pace, but we will give you an estimate as to what the "average" downsize time is.





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> TIPS FOR EASY HEALING:

A healthy body will heal a piercing wound all on its own, but you can help your piercing heal easier by doing the following:

- **DO** return to the studio and have your piercing downsized after a few weeks if you have no swelling and the jewellery appears too long.
- **DO** change your bedding/pillowcases regularly.
- **DO** wear clean, comfortable, loose fitting clothing if covering the wound site.
- **DO** disinfect regularly any personal items that might come into contact with your piercing such as glasses, phone or headphones. If you have healing piercings in one ear, use your phone on the other ear.
- **DO** keep your hair pinned away from your piercing.
- **DO** drink lots of water, rest and eat vitamin rich foods.
- **DO** cut down on drinking and smoking, as both of these things slow down the wound healing process and leave you exposed to potential complications longer.
- **DO NOT** sleep on your piercing until after it is downsized at the very earliest, this can cause raised scar tissue bumps or permanent migration.
- **DO NOT** go swimming in any body of water while your piercing is healing for a minimum of 3 months for slow healing piercings ie: cartilage, nipple, navel and surface piercings.
- **DO NOT** touch or allow others to touch your piercing. Handle your piercing only when necessary for aftercare with hands that have just been washed with warm soapy water.



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> NON-EMERGENCY COMPLICATIONS:

Piercings are very slow healing wounds. We actually ask a lot from our body when we ask it to heal a wound with a foreign object that shouldn't really be there. Complications can occur at anytime and are usually nothing to be worried about, but they do need to be addressed.

You can contact the studio anytime with healing concerns regarding your piercing whether it's by phone or via social media, but please go into as much detail as possible, this includes if you've done something to your piercing that you shouldn't have.

> IMPROPER FITTING JEWELLERY:

If you have not had your jewellery downsized when you were advised, this can cause real problems. If the bar is too long you will catch it more, causing redness and irritation bumps, it will become sore to sleep on and may migrate.

If extra length on the piercing shaft remains exposed once your initial swelling has gone down, "crust" will build up on that portion of the jewellery and can be tracked through the piercing causing inflammation, keeping it in a swollen state.

Wearing jewellery that is too tight can cause cutting and embedding. Many people will want the "tightest possible fit" but just like with shoes, tighter doesn't always mean better! Please ensure your jewellery fits comfortably or it can lead to emergency complication.

> LUMPS AND BUMPS:

Lumps and bumps come in many different forms with various causes, the most common is the piercing being knocked, the wearer "playing with" the jewellery or sleeping on it.

Generally speaking, if there is no underlying issue with the jewellery style or size, irritation bumps should subside on their own with your normal aftercare routine. If the bump persists, you can book in a check up appointment with us.



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> CHEMICAL IRRITATION:

Chemical irritation sounds quite severe but it can simply be any product causing aggravation to your piercing, such as hair dye, hair products, makeup and so on. Even working in a smokey, dusty environment can cause irritation.

If you are experiencing chemical irritation, flush the piercing area with sterile saline or clean running water thoroughly. Do not remove your jewellery. Keep your hair pinned back away from your piercing and/or wear loose fitting comfortable clothing and change your bedding regularly.

The irritation should resolve itself within a few days but be vigilant not to repeatedly expose your piercing to an irritant as it may lead to infection.

> EMERGENCY COMPLICATIONS:

Severe swelling and embedding is when your piercing has become extremely swollen and the jewellery is sinking into the skin. It is normal for your piercing to swell to the full size of your initial jewellery, however if it is actually sinking into and underneath your skin you must come into the studio immediately to have longer jewellery installed. If you are unable to return for any reason you can try the following:

- **Icing your piercing:** like any swelling injury, icing may help reduce inflammation particularly if you have experienced trauma to the piercing site. When icing remember to wrap the ice pack in a clean towel or casing, preventing direct skin contact. Do not ice your piercing for longer than 20 minutes per hour.
- **Anti-inflammatories:** over the counter anti-inflammatories ie: Nurofen, Advil etc. can be taken in accordance with the manufacturers instructions and any additional medical guidance given by your GP or pharmacist. Do not take anti-inflammatories if you know or suspect yourself to be allergic or if they contraindicate any medical condition you have. We do not recommend the use of any topical agents applied directly onto your skin.
- **Retire your piercing:** this may not be favourable option for many but piercings are cosmetic only and this is an option if your piercing is causing you distress. Please ensure both the skin surrounding your piercing and your hands have been cleaned beforehand or wear a clean pair of nitrile disposable gloves. Though it may be disappointing, it can always be re-pierced at a later date.



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> INFECTION:

Most bacterial infections are mild enough that your own healthy immune system is strong enough to fight them off, but in rare cases infection can overwhelm the immune system and become serious, requiring medical attention as soon as possible. Signs of potential infection are: extreme heat, redness spreading outward from the wound site, extreme swelling, severe pain, thick yellow or green discharge seeping from the piercing, nausea, fever and swollen lymph nodes.

Severe infection is rare, and even rarer when you follow correct aftercare instructions and practise regular hand washing, however it is still possible.

If you suspect you have an infection, contact your GP or healthcare professional. If you do not feel your piercing is in a state of emergency, you can book in for a check up appointment at our studio. Though we are not medical professionals, we can tell you if your piercing looks like a cause for concern or not.

If you feel your piercing is in a state of emergency, and you are experiencing multiple signs of infection- particularly a fever, please seek emergency medical attention.