

Association of Professional Piercers



Aftercare Guidelines for Oral Piercings

Virtue and Vice Body Piercing

@ Timeless Tattoo
2271 Cheshire Bridge Road
Atlanta, GA 30324
404.315.6925

<http://www.timeless-tattoo.com>

@ Pain and Wonder
285 W Washington Street
Athens, GA 30601
706.208.9588

<http://www.painandwonder.com>

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. Be aware, however, that many doctors have no specific training or experience regarding piercing and may not be educated on how to best assist you.

CLEANING SOLUTIONS

An alcohol-free antimicrobial or antibacterial mouth rinse should be used according to package instructions. Two examples are Tech 2000 and Biotene. These may be available in the oral medications section of your local drugstores. Check with your piercing studio; many studios sell these products for your convenience.

Also: Mild sea salt water rinses. Dissolve a pinch (1/4 teaspoon) non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt to one cup (8 oz.) warm to hot distilled or bottled water. (Avoid hot water for the first few days.) If you have high blood pressure or heart problems, you will need to eliminate the sea salt, and use only plain warm water rinses.

Rinse mouth for 30-60 seconds with solution (see Cleaning Solutions above) after meals during the entire minimum initial healing time. Do not use more than 4-5 times daily and use it over intervals spaced throughout the entire day.

Rinse mouth briefly (10-15 seconds) with the mild sea salt mixture (see recipe above) no more than twice a day. If you are cleaning too often, the top of your tongue will start to turn a white to yellowish color. Continue to clean your piercing, but reduce the number of times you are cleaning it per day.

A new soft bristled toothbrush should be used, to help minimize the introduction of bacteria into your mouth.

CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS

Rinse mouth for 30-60 seconds with solution (see Cleaning Solutions above) after meals during the entire minimum initial healing time. Do not use more than 4-5 times daily and use it over intervals spaced throughout the entire day. Rinse mouth briefly (10-15 seconds) with the mild sea salt mixture (see recipe above) no more than twice a day. If you are cleaning too often, the top of your tongue will start to turn a white to yellowish color. Continue to clean your piercing, but reduce the number of times you are cleaning it per day.

A new soft bristled toothbrush should be purchased, to help reduce the bacteria that are introduced into your mouth.

WHAT IS NORMAL

Swelling of the area is perfectly normal during the first part of healing an oral piercing. It can be greatly reduced by gently sucking (rather than chewing) on clean ice. Chipped or shaved ice, or small cubes are best. The majority of the swelling usually lasts for only 3-5 days.

Any new piercing can bleed off and on for a few days. There can also be some bleeding under the surface resulting in temporary bruising or discoloration. This is perfectly normal and not indicative of any complication.

Some tenderness or discomfort in the area of a new piercing is not unusual. You may feel aching, pinching, tightness or other unpleasant sensations off and on for several days or longer.

Don't be alarmed if you see a fairly liquid, yellowish secretion coming from the piercing. This is blood plasma, lymph and dead cells, which is perfectly normal. All healing piercings secrete, it just looks different inside the mouth, as it doesn't have a chance to dry and form a crust as it does on ear or body piercings. This is not pus, but indicates a healing piercing.

Plaque may form on tongue jewelry, commonly on the bottom ball and/or post. Scrub your barbell with a soft bristled toothbrush (gently during healing). If you are diligent with oral hygiene the jewelry will not need to be removed for cleaning, and it can usually be left in even for routine visits to the dentist.

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.

Each body is unique, and healing times can vary considerably. If you have any questions, please contact your piercer.

Once initial swelling is down, having your piercer replace the post portion of bar style jewelry with a shorter post may be wise. Jewelry that fits more closely is less likely to irritate your mouth or get between your teeth and be bitten.

If you like your piercing, leave jewelry in at all times. Even 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 oral piercing may not!

Keep following the care procedures during the entire minimum initial healing time, even if the piercing seems healed sooner.

WHAT TO DO

Try to sleep with your head propped up on pillows during the first few nights of healing; keeping your head above your heart will help to avoid much initial overnight swelling.

An over-the-counter, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.) taken according to package instructions can reduce discomfort, and it can also help to diminish swelling the first few days.

Check twice daily with clean hands to be sure the threaded ends on your jewelry are on tight. To clean hands, wash them carefully with liquid antibacterial soap. If your hands aren't freshly washed, don't touch yourself above the neck during the initial healing time.

Replace your toothbrush and make sure to keep it clean so that everything that goes into your mouth is hygienic while you are healing. A sensitive type of toothpaste may be less irritating to your mouth during healing than a usual, stronger variety.

Try to go slowly when you eat and to take small bites when you are getting used to your new jewelry. Cold foods and beverages feel great and can help diminish swelling. Drink plenty of liquids, especially bottled water.

Get enough sleep and eat a nutritious diet. The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.

WHAT TO AVOID

No oral sexual contact including French (wet) kissing or oral sex during the entire initial healing period, even if you are in a monogamous relationship. (If you had a large cut you would not allow anyone to spit into it! This is essentially the same thing.)

Avoid chewing on gum, tobacco, fingernails, pencils, sunglasses, etc. , during healing. Don't share plates, cups or eating utensils. Reducing smoking or quitting is highly advisable when healing an oral piercing. Smoking increases risks and can lengthen the healing time. Avoid undue stress and recreational drug usage.

Stay away from aspirin, large amounts of caffeine, and alcoholic beverages for the first several days. Alcoholic beverages include all beer, wine and hard liquor. These can cause additional swelling, bleeding and discomfort. Refrain from eating spicy, salty, acidic, or hot temperature foods and beverages for a few days.

Do not play with the piercing for the initial healing time beyond the necessary movement for speaking and eating. The mouth withstands a lot of trauma from normal speaking and eating. Try to avoid other disturbances such as excessive talking, actively playing with the jewelry, or clicking the jewelry against your teeth. Undue stress on the piercing can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration and other complications.

Even after healing, excessive play with oral jewelry can result in permanent damage to teeth, gums, and oral structures. Metal is harder than the human body; be gentle.

Do not use Listerine or other mouthwash that contains alcohol. It can irritate the area and delay healing.

Don't use too many different products; select and use only one cleaning solution (such as Tech 2000 or Biotene) plus sea salt.

ORAL PIERCING HINTS AND TIPS

Some piercees will carry a spare ball in their wallet or purse. This is particularly advisable if you wear non-metallic balls such as acrylic, which is more fragile.

If you break or lose a ball, a small piece of clean pencil eraser can be press-fit onto the post as an emergency measure to keep the jewelry from coming out until a replacement can be obtained.

On barbells/labret studs you may change the ball portion of the jewelry at any time, but the original post should remain until initial swelling is down.

TONGUE:

- Try to focus on keeping your tongue level in your mouth to avoid biting on the jewelry as you eat. Your mouth is likely to feel uncoordinated at first, but this will pass.
- Try eating small bites of solid foods by placing food directly onto the molars with clean fingers or a fork. Food that is already in the back of the mouth doesn't have to get moved there by your tongue.
- Gently brush your tongue and jewelry when you are healing. Once healed brush tongue and jewelry thoroughly to keep plaque away.

LIP / CHEEK:

- Be cautious about opening your mouth wide when you eat, as this can result in the backing of the jewelry catching on your teeth. Take small bites and go slowly at first.
- The outside of the piercing may become somewhat red or pink during healing and this is normal. Refer to the Aftercare Guidelines for Body and Facial Piercings sheet for instructions on how to care for the exterior surface of such a piercing.