

## WHAT TO AVOID

- **Do not play with your jewelry.** Long term effects include permanent damage to teeth, gums, and other oral structures. See the APP's Brochure: *Oral Piercing Risks and Safety Measures* for more information.
- Avoid undue trauma; excessive talking or playing with the jewelry during healing can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration, and other complications.
- Avoid using mouthwash containing alcohol. It can irritate the piercing and delay healing.
- Avoid oral sexual contact including French (wet) kissing or oral sex during healing (even with a long-term monogamous partner).
- Avoid chewing on tobacco, gum, fingernails, pencils, sunglasses, and other foreign objects that could harbor bacteria.
- Avoid sharing plates, cups, and eating utensils.
- Avoid smoking! It increases risks and lengthens healing time.
- Avoid recreational drug use.
- Avoid aspirin, alcohol, and large amounts of caffeine as long as you are experiencing bleeding or swelling.
- Avoid submerging healing piercings in bodies of water such as lakes, pools, etc.

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

Your \_\_\_\_\_ piercing

is expected to take \_\_\_\_\_ or longer to heal.

Piercer: \_\_\_\_\_

Jewelry: \_\_\_\_\_

Earliest Change/Downsize Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For any additional information contact your piercer.**

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**\*Disclaimer:** 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. If you suspect an infection, seek medical attention. Be aware that many doctors have not received specific training regarding piercing. Your local piercer may be able to refer you to a piercing-friendly medical professional. For more information, see the APP Brochure *Troubleshooting For You and Your Healthcare Professional*.

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2013 Edition



**SUGGESTED  
AFTERCARE  
GUIDELINES  
FOR ORAL  
PIERCINGS**



## CLEANING SOLUTIONS

Use one or more of the following solutions for inside the mouth:

- Antimicrobial or antibacterial alcohol-free mouth rinse.
- Plain clean water.
- Packaged sterile saline solution with no additives (read the label), or a sea salt mixture: Dissolve ½ to ¼ teaspoon of non-iodized (iodine free), fine-grain sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of warm distilled or bottled water. A mixture of ½-1 teaspoon of salt to a quart (32 oz.) of water can be made and stored in the refrigerator, then a small amount can be dispensed and warmed for use each time. A stronger mixture is not better; saline solution that is too strong can irritate the piercing.

(Note: 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.)

## CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS FOR INSIDE THE MOUTH

Rinse mouth with your chosen solution for 30-60 seconds after meals and at bedtime (4-5 times daily) during the entire healing period. Cleaning too often or with too strong a rinse can cause discoloration and irritation of your mouth and piercing.

## CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE EXTERIOR OF LABRET (CHEEK AND LIP) PIERCINGS

Soak in saline solution and/or wash in mild, fragrance-free liquid soap.

- **WASH** your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- **SALINE** soak for five to ten minutes once or more per day. Simply soak directly in a cup of warm saline solution for five to ten minutes. For certain placements it may be easier to apply using clean gauze saturated with saline solution. A brief rinse afterward will remove any residue.
- **SOAP** once a day while showering. Lather up a pearl size drop of the soap to clean the jewelry and the piercing. Leave the cleanser on the piercing for thirty seconds, or follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- **RINSE** thoroughly to remove all traces of the soap from the piercing. It is not necessary to rotate the jewelry through the piercing.
- **DRY** by gently patting with clean, disposable paper products. Cloth towels can harbor bacteria and snag on jewelry causing injury.

## WHAT IS NORMAL?

- For the first three to five days or so: significant swelling, light bleeding, bruising, and/or tenderness.
- After that: some swelling, light secretion of a whitish-yellow fluid (not pus).
- A piercing might seem healed before the healing process is complete. This is because they heal from the outside in, and although it feels fine, the tissue remains fragile on the inside. **Be patient**, and keep cleaning throughout the entire healing period.
- Even healed piercings that you have had for years can shrink or close in minutes! This varies from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in—do not leave the hole empty.

## WHAT TO DO

### TO HELP REDUCE SWELLING:

- Allow small pieces of ice to dissolve in the mouth.
- Take an over the counter, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen or naproxen sodium according to package instructions.
- Don't speak or move your jewelry more than necessary.
- Sleep with your head elevated above your heart during the first few nights.

### TO MAINTAIN GOOD ORAL HYGIENE:

- Use a new soft-bristled toothbrush and store it in a clean area away from other toothbrushes.
- Brush your teeth and use your chosen rinse (saline, water, or mouthwash) after every meal.
- During healing floss daily, and **gently** brush your teeth, tongue, and jewelry. Once healed, brush the jewelry more thoroughly to avoid plaque build up.

### TO STAY HEALTHY:

- The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.
- Get enough sleep.
- To help healing and bolster your ability to fight infection eat a nutritious diet.<sup>1</sup> If you don't, consider taking nutritional supplements daily.
- Avoid emotional stress, which can increase healing times by up to 40%.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Nutrition Guidelines to Improve Wound Healing" Cleveland Clinic 2008. 4 Jan. 2013 [http://my.clevelandclinic.org/healthy\\_living/nutrition/hic\\_nutrition\\_guidelines\\_to\\_improve\\_wound\\_healing.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/healthy_living/nutrition/hic_nutrition_guidelines_to_improve_wound_healing.aspx)

<sup>2</sup>"The Impact of Psychological Stress on Wound Healing: Methods and Mechanisms" Gouin, J.P. 2011 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3052954/>

## ORAL PIERCING HINTS & TIPS

### JEWELRY:

- Once the swelling has subsided, it is vital to replace the original, longer jewelry with a shorter post to avoid intra-oral damage. Consult your piercer for their downsize policy.
- Because this necessary jewelry change often occurs during healing, it should be done by a qualified piercer.
- 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.
- Contact your piercer for a non-metallic jewelry alternative if your metal jewelry must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure). See the APP brochure *Preparing for Medical and Dental Procedures* for more information.
- 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. Should the jewelry be removed, the surface cells can close up sealing the infection inside the piercing channel, resulting in an abscess. Until an infection is cleared up, leave in quality jewelry or an appropriate substitute.

### EATING:

- Slowly eat small bites of food placed directly onto your molars.
- Avoid eating spicy, salty, acidic, or hot temperature foods or beverages for a few days.
- Cold foods and beverages can be soothing and help reduce swelling.
- Foods like mashed potatoes and oatmeal are hard to eat because they stick to your mouth and jewelry.
- For tongue piercing, try to keep your tongue level in your mouth as you eat because the jewelry can get between your teeth when your tongue turns.
- For labret (cheek and lip) piercings: be cautious about opening your mouth too wide as this can result in the jewelry catching on your teeth.