

CLEANING AND HEALING OF PIERCED BODY PARTS

General Care:

Ear, Belly, Nipple & Nose Piercings

- **Always wash hands thoroughly before contact with piercing.**
- **Do not use** rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide. (*Both slow the healing of pierced area by drying and killing new healthy cells.*)
- **Do not use** bacitracin or other ointments. (*Ointments attempt to heal the skin & may slow oxygen transport to the tissue.*)
- **Use salt soaks** for best care/cleaning of ring or stud and loosening dry material on the skin (*¼ teaspoon of sea salt or teaspoon of table salt dissolved in 8oz of warm water*).
- To clean the surrounding skin, use mild antiseptic products such as benzalkonium chloride, (*Bactine, any liquid antibacterial soap – avoid perfumed products*). Dilute 50/50 with water, if soap is too harsh.
 - Twice a day saturate a cotton swab or Q-Tip with the cleaning solution, apply to pierced area, let soak for a few minutes.
 - Remove any dried matter.
 - Rotate the jewelry while the area is wet.

Ear Piercing of the Pinna (above the lobe)

- Because of decreased vascularization in the upper pinna of the ear, it will take longer than the ear lobe to heal, generally between 12-16 weeks.
- It is important to not irritate the ear, it is recommended that you sleep on the non-pierced side (*or sleep on your back if both ears are pierced*). Use the un-pierced ear when talking on the telephone (*or ear phones if both are pierced*).

Pierced Belly Buttons or Nipples

- Pierced belly buttons heal in 6-12 months, pierced nipples heal in 6-8 weeks.
- Options for cleaning area with salt water soaks: Make a suction seal between cup and belly button by leaning over cup, then lie down on a towel, lie on your back, cup should be sealed to abdomen. Soak the area for at least 10 minutes. Rinse with plain water. Dry the area thoroughly after soaks.
- **OR**, Clean the area with salt water soaked cotton swabs or Q-tips. Soak the area for at least 10 minutes. Rinse with plain water. Dry the area thoroughly after soaks.
- Wear loose fitting clothing (*Clear, pink, or slightly bloody discharge is normal for several days after piercing*).

Nose Piercing

- **Do not remove** the stud for 8 weeks. Healing may take 12-24 weeks, depending on location of piercing.
- **Avoid** touching the stud unnecessarily.
- Nose piercings can close within hours, so never leave the piercing without jewelry.
- The special nose stud is designed to be worn with the stem pointing up the nose. This is not normally uncomfortable. If it causes irritation, move the stud slightly until a comfortable position is found.

see reverse side

CLEANING AND HEALING OF PIERCED BODY PARTS

General care:

Tongue, Cheek and Lip Piercings

- Healing time 6-8 weeks
- No oral contact of any kind for 6 weeks (*no wet kissing or oral sex*).
- Suck on ice or popsicles the first 24-48 hours to minimize swelling and pain.
- Reduce intake of warm beverages, hot or spicy foods, tobacco, alcohol and anything irritating to your mouth.
- Rinse with mouthwash for 30-60 seconds after consumption of anything other than water. If *Listerine* is too harsh it may be diluted, or use teaspoon sea salt to an 8oz glass of water.
- Use *Gly-Oxide/Peroxy* twice daily following the instructions on the bottle: 5 drops on top, 5 drops underneath; let foam and spit. (*This is very important.*) Afterwards you may rinse with water or salt water.

Tongue

- The size of the stud is important in the healing process. It is best to use a post ¼ inch longer than the thickness of your tongue. When the swelling has improved, the post can be downsized to a slightly shorter but still roomy length. After 6-8 weeks you can wear a stud the length of the piercing.

Cheek and Lip

- The outer opening of the piercing is best treated using liquid antibacterial soap or Bactine. If the liquid soap is too harsh it may be diluted 50/50 with water (avoid perfumed products). Apply liberally with a cotton swab or Q-tip. Rotate the jewelry only after the area is moist and dry material has been loosened or removed.
- Clean 2-3 times daily.
- Continue the above care regimen for 6-8 weeks.

Genital Piercing

- Avoid sexual contact until piercing is fully healed, from 6-10 weeks.
- To clean use warm water with a cleansing agent of antibacterial soap. (ie, *Phisoderm*, *Bactine*, or liquid antibacterial soaps such as *Dial*, *Lever 2000*, or *Softsoap*) and avoid perfumed products. Dilute 50/50 with water if irritation occurs.
- Leave the cleanser on the skin for 3 minutes; lather and work the ring back and forth through the piercing half a dozen times.
- Remove any dried matter from the surface of the ring and around the opening of the piercing before turning the ring or stud.
- Rinse under running water or use a peri-cleanse bottle (*available over the counter in most drug stores*); it has a squirt top which is ideal for rinsing the area.
- Urine may irritate the area but usually does not cause infection.
- Keep the new piercing clean.
- **Never touch it with dirty hands.**
- During sexual contact, use barriers (*condoms, dams, etc.*) to keep saliva and other body fluids out of your piercing (*avoid sex for 6 to 10 weeks after piercing*).

Check our website: www.uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this medical concern or others.

For an appointment: www.uhs.berkeley.edu or call **510-642-2000** Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice