



## Agaru Piercing Aftercare

### BASIC PIERCING CARE

The purpose of cleaning a healing piercing is to remove any dead cells and discharge excreted by your body as well as any external dirt and bacteria picked up during the day. You are not treating the wound with medicine or making it heal, but rather keeping the area clean while your body heals itself. Basic hygiene and common sense, with particular attention to the specific area, are all that are required. New piercings should be cleaned two to three times daily, depending on your skin sensitivity, activities and environment. Continue cleaning every day for the entire healing period. Keep in mind that over-cleaning or using too many products can irritate your piercing. You wouldn't wash your hands three times in a row with different kinds of soap, so why do it to your piercing?

### HELPFUL HINTS & COMMON SENSE

- Natural fibers like cotton allow covered piercings to breathe. Loose fitting clothing will help avoid rubbing and irritation of the piercing.
- Wear clean clothing. Dirty clothes over a piercing can harbor bacteria and other infectious matter. Make sure your sheets and bedding are clean as well.
- Avoid contact with other people's body fluids (saliva, sweat, etc.).
- If you exercise, be sure to clean your piercing afterward.
- Check threaded jewelry every day to make sure balls are screwed tightly in place.
- Keep pets away from fresh piercings. Animal dander can cause serious infections.
- STAY HEALTHY. The healthier your lifestyle, the more quickly you heal. This includes eating well, easing stress, and getting enough sleep. A good multivitamin can help your body rebuild itself. Avoid getting pierced while you are sick or pregnant. Reduce smoking and avoid recreational drug use.

### USE ONE OF THESE PRODUCTS:

#### LIQUID ANTI MICROBIAL / GERMICIDAL SOAP

These products not only kill germs, but also remove residue build-up from perspiration, cosmetics, and healing discharge. Medicated products such as Provon and Satin soap are most effective and least irritating, and are available from your piercer or pharmacy. The soap used should be free of heavy dyes or perfumes. Also keep away from antibacterial soaps containing triclosan, as they are more irritating and less effective over time. Be sure to use liquid soap, as bar soap is easily contaminated during use.

To clean the piercing, first wash your hands with the above soap. Never touch your piercing with dirty hands! That is the easiest way to get an infection. Then let warm water run over your piercing for a few minutes to loosen dried discharge. This crusty discharge is secreted lymph, blood plasma, and dead cells, and is normal part of a healing piercing. Next, lather the jewelry and surrounding skin, removing excess discharge and matter around the piercing. RINSE WELL. It is not necessary to turn the jewelry through the skin while cleaning.

#### WARM SALT WATER

Warm salt water soaks work wonders in healing piercings. They help draw out discharge, soothe irritations and prevent infection. They also stimulate circulation, which encourages speedy healing. You can use soaks for general healing, to remove dried discharge before cleaning, and to treat minor infections and irritations. We strongly suggest soaking your piercing for several minutes at least once a day, more often if you are having trouble with healing, although do not exceed three times daily.

Non-iodized sea salt (available at health food stores and most grocery stores) works best as it is free of additives. Most table salts contain extra chemicals (aluminum, magnesium, iodide, etc.), which can irritate and sting, and dextrose (sugar), which can cause localized yeast infections. Epsom salts are too strong and not meant for surface wound soaking. Don't use them.

To soak, dissolve a pinch (1/4 teaspoon) of sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of hot water. A stronger solution is not better, and may be harmful to your piercing. Tip the glass and hold it over your piercing for 5-15 minutes (until the water cools), pressing the container against the skin to form a seal. For ear, nipples and naval piercings you can pour the mixture into a shot glass, medicine cup, or other small container. For nostrils and other facial piercings try the clear plastic caps from squirt water bottles.

### THE FOLLOWING SHOULD NOT BE USED:

**RUBBING ALCOHOL** is far too harsh. It irritates and dries out skin, delays healing and may not be as effective on germs as previously thought. Witch hazel solutions containing alcohol should also be avoided.

**HYDROGEN PEROXIDE** does kill many bacteria, but it also destroys the healthy skin around the piercing. Used long enough, it can eat away at the skin and actually keep your piercing from healing. Stay away from it.

**ANTIBIOTIC OINTMENTS** includes products such as Neosporin and Bacitracin. These do not work for more than two weeks, as your body becomes tolerant to the antibiotic in that time. This makes them worthless for healing piercings. They also have large amounts of petroleum jelly in them, which keeps oxygen out of the piercing and creates the perfect warm, moist environment for bacteria to breed. The greasy barrier also keeps water and cleaning solutions from effectively reaching your piercing, making it impossible to clean. Read the label: "Do not use on puncture wounds."

**BETADINE (PROVIDONE IODINE) / HIBICLENS** solutions may be used for first aid or surgical wound care, but for long term care they are actually too strong and may delay healing. Many people also develop sensitivity to these solutions over time.

## SPECIAL CARE FOR ORAL PIERCINGS:

### SWELLING

Expect your new piercing to be rather swollen for at LEAST several days, with residual swelling for a month or so. Sucking on crushed ice for the first few days helps keep swelling down and soothes your mouth. Anti-inflammatories (Ibuprofen/Advil/Motrin) will also help. Keep your head elevated for a few days (extra pillows) and try not to talk too much. Also avoid straws and pipes, as the suction may cause bleeding and more swelling. Eat whatever is comfortable, though anything spicy, acidic, or hot in temperature may increase discomfort. In the first few days chamomile tea may also help keep swelling down and soothe the pain. Let it cool or chill it, and hold it in your mouth while drinking.

To allow for swelling, the initial jewelry is larger than the jewelry which can ultimately be worn. Once the swelling is gone and the piercing is healed, shorter or smaller diameter jewelry can be used. Leaving larger jewelry in is very often the cause of chipped teeth, irritated gums, scarring and other oral damage. But be patient! Changing jewelry too soon or too often can result in more swelling and delayed healing.

### CLEANING

You will need to clean the inside of your mouth every time you eat, drink anything other than water, or smoke. Rinse for 30-60 seconds with warm salt water or non-alcohol anti microbial mouthwash (Tech 2000 and Biotene are two good options) diluted according to package instructions. This will not only clean your mouth, but will soothe the mouth pain and speed healing. It also minimizes the white discharge which forms around the hole, and helps eliminate residue from smoking. Listerine diluted with 50% water is another suitable option.

### LIP / CHEEK / LABRET / BEAUTY MARK PIERCINGS

In addition to the above suggestions, you will also need to clean the outside of your piercing 2-3 times daily. Anti microbial/germicidal soaps tend to be the most effective where oily skin, make-up, or smoking is an issue. Warm salt water soaks on the outside of the piercings are strongly suggested to speed healing and minimize crusty dried discharge.

### GENERAL

Try to cut back on smoking, and avoid chewing gum or playing with your piercing during healing. Avoid wet kissing and unprotected oral sex until healed. Remember this is an open wound, and you could be exchanging more than just bacteria. Even if you are monogamous, your partner still has different natural bacteria than you do, which can cause infections.

Keep your fingers out of your mouth! Don't lick your fingers, chew your nails, or touch the piercing during healing. This also applies to chewing on pen caps and other distractions. Get a new toothbrush or put the old one through the dishwasher. After the first few days gently brush your tongue and jewelry when you clean your teeth. This will help remove bacteria and plaque build-up, especially on the bottom ball of tongue jewelry. Sensitive or natural toothpastes may be more comfortable than strong commercial varieties.

### GENITAL PIERCINGS

Always discuss aftercare directly with your piercer as different forms of genital piercings require different care. Sexual contact is prohibited for the initial healing time, but hygienic condoms and dental dams are recommended until the piercing is fully healed. Using a water based lubricant in conjunction with protection can also help avoid rubbing or tearing during intercourse.

### HEALING TIMES

Below are approximate healing times for well cared for piercings for most people. Keep in mind that your piercing may heal more quickly or take even longer. Since most piercings have periods of doing well and "Acting up," do not assume that the disappearance of discharge means you are healed.

At the end of the healing time, cleaning 2-3 times daily is no longer required, although cleaning once a day is still suggested. At this point jewelry can safely be changed, but should not be left out of any piercing. Even once the hole becomes permanent, it can still shrink and make jewelry reinsertion more difficult. If you need to hide the piercing or need non-metallic/flexible jewelry for surgery, pregnancy, etc., call the shop. As a general rule, if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in it.

PIERCING LOCATION	HEALING TIME
Ear Lobe _____	6 - 8 weeks
Ear Cartilage _____	4 - 9 months
Eyebrow _____	8 - 10 weeks
Nostril _____	8 - 10 weeks
Nasal Septum _____	2 - 3 months
Nasal Bridge _____	3 - 5 months
Tongue _____	4 weeks
Lip-Labret _____	2 - 3 months
Beauty Mark/Cheek _____	2 - 4 months
Nipple _____	4 - 6 months
Surface Piercings _____	1 year or longer
Genitalia _____	Varies