

## EATING:

- Slowly eat small bites of food that you put right onto your molars.
- Don't eat spicy, salty, acidic, or hot temperature foods or beverages for a few days.
- Be extra careful of your jewelry when eating crunchy food.
- Cold foods and drinks feel good and help reduce swelling.
- Foods like mashed potatoes and oatmeal are hard to eat because they stick to your mouth and jewelry.
- For tongue piercings; try to keep your tongue from twisting in your mouth when you eat because you can bite the jewelry when your tongue turns.
- For lip piercings: be careful not to open your mouth too wide because your jewelry can catch on your teeth.
- Each body is different and your healing time may be a lot longer or shorter than your friends'. If you have any questions, contact your piercer.

## WHAT TO AVOID

- **Do not play with your jewelry.** You will cause permanent damage to teeth, gums, and other oral structures. See the APP Brochure: *Oral Piercing Risks and Safety Measures* for more information.
- Avoid talking too much when your piercing is new. This could make ugly, uncomfortable scar tissue form, and make your healing take longer.
- Avoid using mouthwash that has alcohol in it. The alcohol can irritate your piercing and delay healing.
- Avoid kissing or contact with others' bodily fluids like saliva while you are healing.
- Avoid chewing on gum, fingernails, pencils, sunglasses, tobacco, and other foreign objects that could have bacteria on them.
- Avoid sharing plates, cups, forks, and spoons.
- Avoid stress and recreational drug use, including too much caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.
- Avoid aspirin as long as you are bleeding or swelling.
- Avoid putting a healing piercing in a lake, pool, hot tub, etc. To protect a lip piercing use a waterproof bandage (such as Clean Seals™). You can buy them in any drugstore.
- Don't smoke! It increases risks and lengthens healing time.

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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This brochure contains wording and information written specifically for minors. For additional information, please see our brochure *Suggested Aftercare Guidelines for Oral Piercings*.

**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 think you have an infection, visit a doctor, but be aware that many doctors have not received specific training about piercing. Your local piercer may be able to suggest a piercing-friendly medical professional. For more information, see the APP Brochure *Troubleshooting For You And Your Healthcare Professional*.

Use of this brochure does not imply membership in the APP. A current list of APP members can be found at safepiercing.org. False claims of membership should be reported to the APP.

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2011 EDITION



# TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEW ORAL PIERCING



## WHAT TO CLEAN WITH

### USE ONE OR BOTH OF THE FOLLOWING SOLUTIONS FOR INSIDE THE MOUTH:

- Packaged sterile saline solution made for wound care (read the label), or a non-iodized sea salt mixture you make yourself: dissolve 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon of non-iodized (iodine-free) sea salt into one cup (8 oz.) of warm distilled or bottled water. A stronger solution can irritate your piercing, so don't put in too much salt!
- An alcohol-free mouth rinse that is antimicrobial or antibacterial.

*(Ask your piercer, check the APP website, or call 888.888.1APP for the best products.)*

## HOW TO CLEAN YOUR ORAL PIERCING

- Rinse your mouth with the saline solution or mouth rinse for 30 seconds after you eat and before bed (4-5 times daily) during the whole healing period. Cleaning too often or with too strong a rinse can irritate or discolor your mouth and piercing.
- For lip piercings, also clean the outside surface as explained below.

## HOW TO CLEAN THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR ORAL PIERCING

### SOAK IN SALINE SOLUTION AND/OR WASH IN MILD, FRAGRANCE-FREE LIQUID SOAP—PREFERABLY ANTI-MICROBIAL OR GERMICIDAL.

- **WASH** your hands really well before you clean or touch your piercing for any reason.
- **SALINE** soak for five minutes once or more per day. Seal a cup of warm saline solution over the area. For some piercings it will be easier to use clean gauze or paper towels soaked in saline solution. Rinse after you salt soak, because dried salt crystals could hurt you and your piercing.
- **SOAP** only once or twice a day. While showering, lather up a dime sized drop of the soap to clean the jewelry and the piercing. Leave the cleanser on the piercing no more than thirty seconds.
- **RINSE** to remove all of the soap from the piercing. You do not have to rotate your jewelry through the piercing.
- **DRY** gently with clean, disposable paper products. Cloth towels could snag on jewelry, and they might have bacteria on them.

## WHAT IS NORMAL?

- For the first three to five days: a lot of swelling, some bleeding, bruising, and/or soreness or mild pain.
- After that: some swelling and oozing of a whitish-yellow fluid (not pus).
- A piercing may seem just fine before the whole healing process is done. This is because they heal from the outside in. Even if it feels okay, the new skin is weak on the inside. **Be patient**, and keep cleaning all the way to the end of the healing time.
- If you have had a piercing for years, it can still shrink or close in minutes if you take out your jewelry! This is different from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewelry in—do not leave the hole empty.

## WHAT TO DO

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

### TO HELP REDUCE SWELLING:

- Let small pieces of ice to dissolve in your mouth.
- Don't speak or move your jewelry more than you have to.
- Avoid lots of caffeine and taking aspirin; these can increase bleeding or swelling.
- Sleep with your head propped up above your heart for the first few nights.

### TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH CLEAN:

- Use a new soft-bristled toothbrush and keep it away from other toothbrushes in a clean area.
- Brush your teeth and do a rinse (with saline or mouthwash) after every meal.
- Floss daily, and gently brush your teeth, tongue, and jewelry. After you are healed, brush the jewelry really well to avoid plaque build up.

## ORAL PIERCING HINTS AND TIPS

### JEWELRY:

- Once your swelling has gone down, you **must** change the original, longer jewelry to a shorter post to avoid damage to your teeth and gums. Ask your piercer for their downsizing policy.
- Because this important jewelry change is often done during healing, have your piercer change it for you.
- Leave jewelry in at all times. Your piercing can shrink or close super fast—even if you've had it for years. If you take it out, getting it back in later can be difficult or impossible.
- With clean hands be sure to check threaded ends on your jewelry for tightness daily. ("Righty-tighty, lefty-loosey.")
- Carry a clean spare ball in case you lose or break one.
- Contact your piercer for a non-metallic retainer if your metal jewelry has to be removed (for example, if your doctor or dentist requires you to take it out for a procedure).
- If you decide you don't want your piercing any more, simply remove the jewelry (or have a professional piercer remove it). Keep cleaning the piercing daily until the hole closes. Most of the time, only a small mark will be visible.
- If you think you have an infection, **leave in** quality jewelry so the infection can drain. If you take the jewelry out, the surface can close up. That can trap the infection inside the piercing and cause an abscess. Do **not** remove jewelry unless instructed to so by a medical professional.
- For more information on body jewelry, see the APP Brochures, *Jewelry for Initial Piercings*, and *Jewelry for Healed Piercings*.

