



Tattoo Aftercare Instructions

Proper aftercare is crucial for ensuring your new tattoo heals well, maintains its vibrancy, and avoids complications like infection or scarring. These guidelines are based on standard practices from reputable sources and can vary slightly depending on your tattoo artist's recommendations, skin type, tattoo size, and location. Always follow your artist's specific advice first. Healing typically takes 2-4 weeks for the surface layer and up to 3-6 months for full recovery.

Traditional Method

- **Immediate Care (First 1-2 Hours):** Remove the initial bandage within 1-2 hours (or as instructed by your artist—some recommend up to 24 hours). Wash your hands thoroughly with soap before touching the tattoo.
- Gently wash the tattoo with lukewarm water and unscented antibacterial soap (e.g., Dial Gold or Dr. Bronner's). Use only your clean hands—no washcloths or sponges, as they can harbor bacteria. Rinse thoroughly and pat dry with a clean paper towel (do not rub).
- Apply a thin layer of fragrance-free, artist-recommended ointment (e.g., Aquaphor or a tattoo-specific balm like Hustle Butter). Avoid petroleum-based products if they clog your pores. Do not re-bandage unless advised.

Daily Routine (Days 2-14 and Beyond)

- **Washing:** Clean the tattoo 2-3 times a day, or more if it gets dirty/sweaty. Use lukewarm water and unscented antibacterial soap. Pat dry gently—never rub or use a towel that might leave fibers.
- **Moisturizing:** After each wash and dry, apply a thin layer of unscented, fragrance-free lotion or aftercare cream (e.g., Bepanthen or a tattoo balm) 3-5 times daily. Use just enough to keep it hydrated—over-moisturizing can lead to breakouts or delayed healing. Switch to lotion after the first 3-5 days if using ointment initially.
- **Clothing and Environment:** Wear loose, breathable clothing to avoid friction. Keep the tattoo out of direct sunlight; once healed (after 2-4 weeks), apply SPF 30+ sunscreen daily to prevent fading.
- Drink plenty of water to keep your skin hydrated from the inside out.

What to Avoid

To prevent irritation, infection, or damage:

- No picking, scratching, peeling, slapping, or rubbing the tattoo—even if it itches (which is normal during scabbing). Let flakes fall off naturally.
- Avoid soaking for at least 2 weeks: No swimming pools, oceans, baths, hot tubs, saunas, or long showers.

- Skip strenuous activities, heavy sweating, or gym workouts for the first week to minimize irritation.
- No direct sun exposure, tanning beds, or UV lights until fully healed.
- Avoid alcohol, smoking, and blood-thinning medications (if possible) as they can slow healing.
- Steer clear of scented products, lotions with alcohol/petroleum, or anything abrasive like exfoliants.
- Don't sleep on the tattoo if possible, and use clean sheets to avoid bacteria.

Healing Stages: What to Expect

- **Days 1-3:** The tattoo may ooze plasma, ink, or blood— this is normal. It will feel tender, red, and swollen. Keep it clean and moisturized.
- **Days 4-7:** Scabbing or light peeling begins. It may itch intensely—resist scratching. Continue washing and moisturizing.
- **Weeks 2-4:** Peeling completes; the tattoo looks dull or cloudy as new skin forms. Colors brighten as it heals. Reduce moisturizing to 2-3 times a day.
- **After 4 Weeks:** Surface healing is complete, but deeper layers continue to settle. Protect from sun indefinitely to preserve colors.

Signs of Problems: When to Seek Help

Monitor for infection or issues. Contact your doctor or artist if you notice:

- Excessive redness, swelling, heat, or pain beyond the first few days.
- Pus, yellow/green discharge, foul odor, or fever.
- Severe itching, rash, or allergic reaction (e.g., to ink).
- Blistering, excessive scabbing, or scarring. If something feels off, err on the side of caution—early intervention prevents complications.

Remember, everyone's healing process differs based on factors like age, health, and tattoo placement (e.g., areas like hands or feet may take longer). If in doubt, consult your tattoo artist or a dermatologist. With proper care, your tattoo should look great for years.