

Aftercare

Aftercare is one of the most important parts of a tattoo session.

Congratulations on your new tattoo!

Proper aftercare is essential for optimal healing and to avoid complications.

This guide will help you through the entire healing process, which typically takes 3–6 weeks.

The First Few Hours

- **Bandage/film:** Your tattoo artist has covered your tattoo with film. The bandage/film should remain in place for at least 2–3 hours—preferably overnight if you got your tattoo during the day. If you got your tattoo in the evening, you should keep the film on overnight.
 - **Derma Skin:** If your tattoo artist has applied Derma Skin, it should remain in place for 1–3 days. Follow your tattoo artist's specific instructions.
 - **Swelling:** It's normal for the tattooed skin to be swollen for a few hours or days after the tattoo session.
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Cleaning and Care

Step 1: Removing the Bandage

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before removing the bandage or film.
 - Bonus points if you use hand sanitizer after washing your hands.
- Gently remove the bandage or film by peeling it off slowly.

PRO TIP: If you're wearing Derma Skin and it's been 2–3 days, it's recommended that you take a shower. The water will help you remove the Derma Skin a little more easily, as the adhesive will loosen.

Step 2: First Wash

- Gently wash the tattoo with lukewarm water and fragrance-free soap (e.g., intimate wash—highly recommended).
- Be sure to wash away all blood, petroleum jelly, and excess ink, but do not scrub the tattoo.
- Use only your clean hands to wash the area—not washcloths or sponges—as they harbor bacteria.
- Avoid getting the tattoo completely soaked. This isn't good for the tattoo.

Step 3: Drying

- Gently pat the tattoo dry with a clean towel or paper towel. Do not rub.
- Let the tattoo air-dry for 2–4 hours before applying cream.

Step 4: Applying Cream

- With clean hands, apply a thin layer of tattoo cream.
- Don't use too much cream—the tattoo shouldn't feel greasy.
- Do not use petroleum jelly, petroleum-based products, or perfumed creams, as these can cause the tattoo to fade or lead to irritation.

Healing Stages

Week 1: Wound Healing

For the first few days, the tattoo will be red, tender, and slightly swollen. It may ooze a little.

The first week is critical for preventing infection, so be extra careful with cleaning and care.

Weeks 2–3: Scab Formation

The tattoo will begin to peel and flake. This is a normal part of the healing process.

Let the scabs fall off on their own—don't pick at them!

The tattoo may appear slightly faded or dull during this period, but the colors will return once the skin has fully healed.

Week 4 and beyond: Deep Healing

After about 3–6 weeks, your tattoo is typically healed on the surface, but the healing process continues beneath the skin for up to several months.

You can now return to your normal activities, but continue to protect the tattoo from the sun.

Daily Care: Repeat the cleaning, drying, and moisturizing process 2–3 times a day for the first two weeks. The tattoo should be kept clean and moist, but not wet.

Do not share tattoo cream or use an old tube, as it may contain bacteria. This can lead to infection if the cream has been exposed to cross-contamination.

Things to Avoid

- **Avoid scratching, picking at, or itching the tattoo.** It's normal for the tattoo to itch and peel during the healing process, but scratching it can ruin the result and cause an infection.
- **Avoid direct sunlight and tanning beds** on the tattooed area for the first 3–4 weeks. Do not use sunscreen until the tattoo has fully healed.
- **Avoid swimming** in indoor pools, the ocean, lakes, or other bodies of water for 3–4 weeks. Your tattoo must be fully healed before it comes into prolonged contact with water.
- **Avoid long, hot baths** and soaking the tattoo, as this can affect the healing process.
- **Avoid exercise or activities** that stretch the skin (e.g., strength training) for at least 2–3 weeks after the tattoo session. If you can't avoid it, make sure your skin isn't stretched too much and that the tattoo isn't covered in sweat.
- **Avoid tight clothing** over the tattoo. Wear loose-fitting, clean clothing that allows the tattoo to breathe.
- **Avoid wearing jewelry** around the tattooed area until the tattoo has healed.
- **Avoid letting others touch** your tattoo, and do not rest the tattooed area against dirty surfaces.
- **Keep pets away** from the tattooed area until the tattoo has healed.

Contact a doctor if...

You should contact your doctor if you experience:

- Increasing redness, swelling, pain, warmth, itching, or discharge from the tattoo
- Yellow discharge/pus, scabs, or boils
- Persistent redness in the tattooed skin or the skin around the tattoo
- A red rash or blisters
- Thickening and scaling in one of the tattoo's colors (most commonly seen in shades of red)
- Small lumps in the tattoo (most commonly seen in black ink)
- Fatigue, abdominal symptoms, or jaundice for weeks or months after getting the tattoo

IMPORTANT! Seek immediate medical attention if you develop a high fever and feel generally unwell, as this may be a sign of blood poisoning.

Special Recommendations

- **Fluid intake:** Drink plenty of water (2–3 liters daily) after your tattoo session. This helps your skin heal better and faster.
- **Sun protection:** Once your tattoo has fully healed, you should always apply high-SPF sunscreen to the tattooed area when it's exposed to the sun. This helps prevent fading over time.
- **No swimming:** Do not go swimming during the healing process as it increases the risk of infection.