

How to care for a new body piercing

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Piercings can be a fun way to express yourself, but they can also cause complications—particularly in areas that aren't the earlobes—and need proper care.

"The first step to caring for your piercing is choosing a qualified piercer," said [Dr. Steven Daveluy](#), an associate professor and program director at Wayne State Dermatology in Michigan. "Select an experienced piercer in a licensed studio. Then, properly care for your new piercing afterward to prevent problems, such as an [infection](#) or your piercing closing."

Daveluy and the American Academy of Dermatology offer these recommendations that people can follow to help ensure piercing success.

- Leave your jewelry in. Don't remove your new piercing for six weeks or more, even at night. The piercing can close if you remove the jewelry too early.
- Keep the piercing clean.
- Always wash your hands so you can prevent infection of newly pierced areas. Use a mild, fragrance-free cleanser and water at least once a day. Thoroughly rinse away soap. Avoid getting water in your ear.
- Don't clean your piercing with [hydrogen peroxide](#) or antibacterial soaps, which can damage healing skin.
- Apply [petroleum jelly](#) around each piercing to keep it moist and help with healing. Using petroleum jelly from a squeeze tube instead of a jar can help prevent transferring germs.
- Pay attention to what your piercing looks like. If it's sore, red, or puffy or oozes yellowish liquid, you may have an infection.

You may be developing a [scar](#) called a keloid if you see the skin around the piercing becoming raised.

"If you think you have an infection and your symptoms don't resolve quickly, make an appointment to see a board-certified dermatologist," Daveluy said.

More information: The Association of Professional Piercers has [more](#) on caring for new piercings.

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