

Crucial Tattoo Studio Healing Care Guide

Once the tattoo procedure is complete, proper aftercare is essential to the healing, and will influence the outcome of your tattoo. Improper care or neglect during the healing process can result in permanent negative effects, such as color loss and less than perfect details. After the artist has completed the application of the tattoo, it is up to you to finish the process properly by following the healing instructions listed below, or follow the advice of your tattoo artist. If you do have any questions, be sure to contact us, and do not to take the suggestions of others without running it by your tattoo artist first.

Healing care preferences can differ depending on whom you ask. Part of this is due to the differences in immune systems from one person to the next. Over many years of tattooing, and paying attention to what techniques have worked the best for the widest variety of people, we have put together this summary of information as a guide to help you get the best results for your new tattoo!

Our preferred method of healing is to use a medical-grade dermal bandage, such as Saniderm or similar product. The ease of use, and sanitary advantages alone make this method a top choice, but the healed tattoo results are what most clients admire most. You will need to use the Saniderm for a full 7-10 days, replacing it as needed throughout the tattoo healing process.

Your artist will apply the initial dermal bandage after your tattoo session has been completed. This bandage will be a thin transparent layer, resembling Saran Wrap, but unlike Saran Wrap, Saniderm is a medical-grade, breathable, waterproof tattoo bandage.

This first piece of Saniderm should be kept applied for anywhere from 4-24 hours, depending on how much the wound is weeping. If your tattoo weeps severely, you may find yourself having to change it earlier than someone who experiences minimal weeping, as fluid may begin to leak from the bandage. It's fine if there is some plasma/blood/lymph fluid buildup under the bandage during this period. Regardless of how much fluid you see in your Saniderm, you should always change the initial film at the 24-hour mark.

Showering while wearing Saniderm is fine, but it's best to keep the time spent in the shower to a minimum. Water may weaken the adhesive of the bandage, which allows for unwanted contaminants to enter the bandage, putting you at higher risk for infection. It's also important to keep an eye on the temperature of the water. Too much heat can separate the bandage from the skin, inflame the skin, and irritate the tattoo.

For these reasons, bathing, swimming, or fully submerging a tattoo dressed in Saniderm is strongly discouraged. Light exercise while wearing Saniderm is fine, but avoid activity that causes excessive sweating. Just as water will weaken the adhesion of the bandage, so will sweat and any other significant amount of fluid. Try to keep the bandage as clean and dry as possible until it's time to remove it.

To remove Saniderm:

Find an edge of the bandage and pull it back over itself in the direction of hair growth. The shower is the ideal place to remove Saniderm. Running water will help loosen the adhesive and relax the skin, making the removal much more comfortable. Dry removal of Saniderm may cause discomfort and added trauma to the skin.

Discard the used bandage and wash the tattoo with a mild soap, preferably fragrance-free, and allow the tattoo to air dry or pat dry with a clean paper towel.

When changing pieces of film, make sure to leave a gap of no more than 30 minutes between the removal and reapplication.

Saniderm Application:

Cut and trim Saniderm to fit around the tattoo – include an extra inch around all sides. TIP: Cutting the edge of the bandage to be round and have no sharp corners will help it adhere better and feel more comfortable.

Peel and discard the white paper wrapping from the sticky side first, and place transparent piece gently over the tattoo.

Once the adhesive side of the bandage is in place, remove the see-through second layer from the top side and smooth bandage film over the tattoo.

Additional removal and reapplication information:

Keep the second bandage on for 3-7 days – the full seven days being ideal. Some people prefer to replace the Saniderm 2-3 times throughout the course of healing. If the skin appears irritated, there is fluid buildup, or the bandage is coming off, it's okay to remove the bandage sooner rather than later. If you believe that your tattoo needs more time to heal, you may continue applying additional Saniderm bandages. However, most customers report complete healing after 2-3 applications. If there is adhesive residue leftover on the skin, or the adhesive is not loosening enough with soap and water alone, coconut oil and baby oil are helpful for removal. Always wash and clean the area completely before re-applying another layer of Saniderm.

Do not reapply any more bandages after the scabbing/flaking phase of tattoo healing has begun. If you find yourself bandage-less during this phase, make sure you're keeping the area moisturized regularly, but not overly saturated. We strongly recommend petroleum free moisturizers, such as Hustle Butter, Vitalitree, Redemption, or a water based lotion such as Lubriderm.

Once the final bandage has been removed, continue caring for the tattoo by washing and moisturizing as needed, until the tattoo is fully healed. The tattoo may appear to be fully healed on the surface once your second Saniderm bandage comes off. However, deeper layers of skin will still be repairing for 2-4 months. We recommend a good moisturizing regimen for this entire period, and avoiding sun exposure that could result in skin cell damage throughout that time as well.

An alternate method of healing for clients whom have increased skin sensitivity or adhesive allergies is to follow a more traditional approach to tattoo aftercare as follows:

Your artist will clean the tattooed area, and apply a bandage after your tattoo session has been completed. This bandage will be an individually wrapped sterile gauze like pad, kept in place with surgical tape, plastic wrap, or both.

Remove bandage after two hours and thoroughly wash your tattoo with a mild soap and warm water. Rinse with water, and dry the tattooed area with clean paper towels.

Keep tattoo uncovered, dry and able to "breathe" for 1-2 hours, then apply a thin layer of **petroleum free** ointment, pat away ointment with clean paper towel, and cover the entire area with transparent plastic wrap. Use medical tape to hold if necessary.

The plastic wrap is an important step designed to keep the tattoo from drying out and help prevent excessive scabbing from forming in the early stages of healing. It also acts as a barrier between your tattooed skin, and your clothing from rubbing up against it, or any other outside elements from getting in to your wound. Each time you remove the plastic wrap, thoroughly clean the entire area with soap and water, rinse, and pat dry with clean paper towels.

For the first 2-3 days, Keep the area covered with plastic wrap both day and night. It is essential to change the wrap every 6 hours or so, and always clean away any plasma from the surface of the skin each time you remove the wrap. Be sure to give the skin some time to "breathe" exposing it to oxygen for at least an hour or more in between wrappings.

After a few days, you can begin leaving the tattooed area unwrapped and exposed to the air at night while you are relaxed, but it is best to continue wrapping your tattoo throughout the day while you are active, to avoid clothing irritating the tattooed area. Pay attention to the signs your body is giving you while the tattoo is unwrapped. It will need a very light layer of ointment from time to time while exposed to the air, but IF your body is weeping fluid and starting to scab, that is a sign to continue wrapping with plastic for a few more days or nights. It is not unusual for people to need to continue to wrap the tattoo for up to a week or more, but most people can discontinue the plastic wrap between 3-5 days.

When you discontinue the plastic wrap, you will need to use **petroleum free** ointment 3-5 times a day in a **very light layer**. The tattoo should not scab more than a very light, paper-thin layer, which will flake away within a few days if it occurs at all. You can switch to a water based lotion towards the end of the healing cycle if you prefer.

For those who cannot use plastic wrap, you will need to keep the area clean with soap and water and pat dry with clean paper towels daily. Apply **petroleum free** ointment in small amounts between 2 - 4 times daily, and **always remove excess ointment** with clean paper towel after each application. Excessive moisture, in the form of either ointment or water, may lead to slower healing, and the building of thicker scab layers on the surface, which can lead to complications through the healing process.

Your body will go through stages healing the tattoo like it would any other surface wound. First, your body will develop a thin scab as a protective layer while healing begins beneath it. **Do not pick or remove scabs!** They will fall away on their own when the new skin beneath them is healed.

Medicated ointments will aid in the healing process if used correctly, but can complicate the process if used improperly. We have products available at the shop we recommend for the healing process, and will advise the use of one over another due to specific healing attributes of individual clients. **DO NOT** use petroleum based ointments, as they are known to prevent oxygen from getting to the skin which can result in slower healing times, and increased risk of possible infection.

DO NOT expose tattoo to sunlight, tanning bed, chlorine, ocean, or submerge in any water for the duration of tattoo healing. Be sure to limit your activity level through the duration of your tattoo's healing, as body movement, sweating, and irritation will have an effect the final outcome of your tattoo. Keep tattoo away from any unsanitary conditions throughout the entire healing procedure, and discontinue use of ointment after all scabs are gone. Most tattoos will take 8-12 days to surface heal, but it is not uncommon for some tattoos to take a bit longer depending on size, and color saturation, skin types, etc. However, deeper layers of skin will still be repairing for 3-4 months, and are more susceptible to sun damage than non-tattooed areas of skin.

After surface healing is complete, the use of water based skin lotion is recommended. In caring for your skin, you are also preserving your tattoo. Exposure to sun and tanning beds can be harmful for your skin, and thus, especially bad for any tattooed areas. It is best for the longevity of your tattoo, to avoid any direct exposure by keeping tattooed areas covered. Otherwise, always use a high SPF sun block when outdoors, and apply generously every hour or two in direct sunlight. **High SPF sun block is NOT adequate protection for tanning beds, or new tattoos under 3-4 months old.**

If you have any questions at all, be sure to contact us right away!
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