



TATTOO AFTERCARE

CLEAN HANDS. GENTLE CARE. TIME TO HEAL.

Your fresh tattoo needs simple, consistent care. Follow your artist's dressing plan and any advice from your healthcare professional.

01 START WITH YOUR DRESSING

Regular bandage or wrap

- Leave it on for the time your artist gives you. Wash your hands before removal. If it sticks, wet it with clean lukewarm water and ease it off; don't pull at the skin.
- Once removed, follow the wash, dry and moisturize steps below. Use a fresh dressing only as directed; don't reuse the old one.

Adhesive film / "second skin"

- Follow the schedule for the exact film your artist used, including any first change. Wear times vary by product; don't assume every film stays on for a week.
- Some ink and fluid collecting inside can be normal. If it leaks, water gets inside, or it lifts enough to expose the tattoo, remove it, clean the area and contact your artist for the next step. Don't patch a broken seal.
- Remove early if you develop burning, a rash or blisters. Peel slowly under lukewarm running water, keeping the film low and close to the skin, following its removal directions. Don't rip it upwards.
- Don't puncture the film, lift it to wash underneath, or add lotion underneath an intact dressing. After final removal, start the routine below.

02 WASH. DRY. MOISTURIZE.

- **Wash your hands first.** With the dressing off, gently wash the tattoo twice daily, and if dirty, using clean hands, lukewarm water and mild fragrance-free soap. Rinse well. No scrubbing or washcloths.
- **Pat dry.** Use a fresh clean paper towel and let the skin finish air-drying. Avoid rubbing and strong shower jets.
- **Moisturize lightly.** Apply a thin layer of a plain, fragrance-free moisturizer recommended by your artist. Reapply when dry; avoid thick, greasy buildup.



PROTECT YOUR TATTOO

Healing, daily habits and when to get help

03 KEEP IT CLEAN AND PROTECTED

- **Shower, don't soak.** No baths, pools, hot tubs, lakes or ocean swimming until the skin is fully healed. A waterproof film is not permission to swim.
- **Leave flakes and scabs alone.** Don't pick, scratch, shave or exfoliate the area. Wear clean, loose clothing and use clean bedding. Keep pets and unwashed hands away.
- **Ease up on friction and sweat.** Skip activities that rub, stretch or irritate the area, and avoid saunas while healing. Keep the tattoo off shared gym equipment.
- **Keep fresh ink out of the sun.** Use shade and loose clothing while healing. Once healed, use broad-spectrum, water-resistant SPF 30+ and reapply at least every two hours outdoors. Avoid tanning beds.
- **Keep products simple.** Avoid alcohol, peroxide, scented products and harsh cleansers. Use antibiotic or steroid creams only if a healthcare professional directs you to.

04 WHAT HEALING CAN LOOK LIKE

Early tenderness, mild swelling, redness and a little clear or ink-tinted fluid can be normal. Itching, flaking and light scabbing can follow. These should gradually settle, rather than intensify.

Healing takes weeks and varies with size, placement and your skin. Deeper healing continues after the surface looks better. Keep protecting it until there are no open areas, oozing, scabs or peeling.

05 WHEN TO GET MEDICAL HELP

Seek medical care promptly for increasing pain, heat or swelling; spreading redness or red streaks; pus or foul-smelling drainage; fever or chills; or a worsening rash or blisters. Don't wait for your artist to reply if infection is possible.

Call 9-1-1 for trouble breathing, swelling of the face, lips or tongue, or fainting. For non-emergency health advice in B.C., call **8-1-1** to speak with a nurse.

Contact your artist for dressing or routine aftercare questions. This general guide does not replace individual medical advice.

SOURCES / Checked October 2026. Tap titles in the digital PDF.

[Mayo Clinic: tattoo care](#)

[HealthLink BC: tattoo problems](#)

[AAD: caring for tattooed skin](#)

[Saniderm: adhesive reactions](#)

[Cleveland Clinic: aftercare](#)

[HealthLink BC: 8-1-1 services](#)

[Saniderm: film leaks and removal](#)