

Tattoo Aftercare: Take It Back To The Basics

As soon as you walk out of the parlor, your tattoo artist is no longer responsible for any infections or problems that may occur with your tattoo if you do not take proper care of it. I see it all the time. The tattoo looks fresh and sharp, and only after a couple of months, the lines have gotten thicker, things are bleeding into each other. Basically, the tattoo looks worn.

Whatever you do, leave the bandage on for a while. I know it is very tempting to want to show your infamous tat, but airborne bacteria will invade your wound. And yes your tattoo is a wound – open flesh is breeding ground for bacteria and infection. Leave the bandage on for a minimum of two hours. Hold off on showing your friends you don't want their nasty germs anyway.

After the bandage is removed wash your tattoo. Use lukewarm water and mild, liquid antibacterial or antimicrobial soap. Something like Satin or Provon, what a lot of old school artist recommend. Dial is a bit too harsh, so stay along the generic brands. It is important to wash away any ointment, blood and plasma. Don't use a washcloth or anything abrasive. Your hand is the best option. If your tattoo feels slimy or slippery, you're skin has probably been oozing plasma. Definitely, try to remove all of that as gently as possible; when plasma dries on the skin surface, it creates scabs.



Pat, do not rub the area, firmly with a clean towel. Follow with your choice of ointment. Aquaphor is a real good one it just is really thick and seems to get everywhere. I always used Cetaphil which contains hardly any chemicals and is really gentle on the skin. A&D ointment, Bacitracin, even specialty products such as Tattoo Goo or H2Ocean are all very good, just no Neosporin! After about 3-5 days of ointments, you can begin using regular moisturizers. Stay away from the lotions with heavy fragrances and dyes. A lot of artist recommend Lubriderm or Eucerin.

Yes, obviously shower. However, do not soak your tattoo or go swimming. Prolonged water exposure will definitely damage your tattoo, so all that should be avoided for 2-3 weeks. Showering is fine, just don't saturate.

There might be peeling, there might be scabbing. Excessive peeling indicates a poorly done tattoo, but a little is normal. Apply warm moist compress to the scabs for about 5 minutes 2-3 times a day to soften scab and they will eventually come off on their own. Do not apply ointment or a lotion to a scab, wait for it to dry. Don't pick, don't scratch!

One last thing, put sunblock on if you're going to be out in the sun a lot. Sun can damage and fade ink so definitely put a minimum of 30SPF sunblock to keep your tattoo vibrant.

I know these concepts require that we possess just a bit of common sense, but it is so easy to overlook taking care of our tattoo. It's more that it has become a part of us and isn't bothering us so why bother with it. Tattoos look ghetto when they're hanging everywhere except in line, so take care!