

Tattoo Aftercare Instructions – Clear Adhesive Bandage

Supplies

- Clean paper towels
- Unscented hypoallergenic soap – I use Dr. Bronner's Baby Unscented Pure-Castile Soap.
- Tattoo aftercare moisturizer – I use coconut oil & Hustle Butter; other options include pure shea butter & Tattoo Goo. Fragrance-Free Lubriderm and Aveeno Daily Moisturizing Lotion are suitable to use starting on day 4 of the aftercare process.
- Clear adhesive bandage

What is a Clear Adhesive Bandage and How Does it Work?

A clear adhesive bandage is a transparent film dressing traditionally used for wound care in the medical field. It is both breathable and waterproof, making it ideal for healing tattoos. It provides an impenetrable barrier between your new tattoo and the environment, keeping your fresh ink safe from bacteria and contaminants. This type of bandage is suitable for most people; however, if you've had a reaction to adhesives in the past, it is best to do a patch test first or use an alternative aftercare regimen.

Research indicates that keeping wounds clean and moist (as opposed to dry) can speed healing time by up to 200 percent. Clear adhesive bandages are designed to do just that. These types of bandages prevent your tattoo from scabbing by sealing in your body's own moisture and enzymes. These natural fluids are then able to work their magic by keeping your cells hydrated, assisting in the efficient break down and removal of dead tissue, promoting the regeneration of damaged blood vessels, and stimulating new cell growth, all the while significantly reducing the pain and itching associated with the tattoo healing process.

The Initial Bandage

At the end of your tattoo session, your artist will apply the initial bandage to the tattooed area. It is recommended to keep this bandage on for 8-48 hours, depending on how much the tattoo is weeping. Your body will naturally secrete fluids such as blood, plasma, and lymph. This is normal and healthy. However, if these fluids are starting to pool beneath your bandage, it's best to change the initial bandage no later than 24 hours after application.

Bandage Removal

It is easiest to remove the bandage while taking a shower. Adjust the water temperature to warm and then wash your hands thoroughly. Next, find an edge of the bandage and slowly start to lift it away from the skin. Allow the running water to loosen the adhesive as you gently pull the bandage in the direction of the hair growth. If necessary, coconut oil or baby oil can be used to loosen the adhesive further and remove any residue. Take your time, do not tear the bandage off like a Bandaid -this will only cause unnecessary trauma to the healing tattoo.

Dispose of the used bandage, then lather up your hands with the tattoo aftercare soap of your choice. Apply the lather to your fresh tattoo and gently wash the area using a circular motion with your fingers. Rinse the area and repeat if needed. You may need to do this a few times to break up and wash away the gooey substance that has accumulated over top your healing tattoo.

Once your tattoo is washed, you can hop out of the shower and use a fresh paper towel and pat the tattoo dry. Do not rub (because ouch!) and do not use a cloth towel as these can harbour bacteria, mould, and chemical residues -definitely not substances you want making contact with your fresh tattoo.

Applying the Second Bandage

Allow your tattoo to air dry for about 45 minutes. Once the area is completely dry, wash your hands thoroughly, dry them with paper

towel, and then apply a very, very thin layer of the tattoo aftercare moisturizer of your choice. Do not rub it on; instead, gently pat it on the area. Take a paper towel and dab the area to remove any excess moisturizer. Ensure that the product is only on the tattoo, and not on the skin around the tattoo -as this will prevent the second bandage from adhering to the skin properly.

Cut and a new piece of clear adhesive bandage to fit your tattoo. Leave at least an extra inch all the way around and round off any corners for best results. Remove the white paper backing from the adhesive film. Make sure the tattooed area is in a neutral position, then apply the adhesive side of the bandage to the tattoo by gently pressing it to the skin. You can now remove the clear plastic top layer by separating a piece where the plastic is broken and pulling it off the bandage. If it's not coming off easily or it's starting to pull the bandage off, you can hop in the shower where the plastic will be more easily removed under running water.

This second bandage can be worn for 3 – 6 days. Five to 6 days is ideal; however, if fluid has accumulated beneath the bandage, the skin is becoming irritated, or the bandage is starting to peel off, it can be removed sooner. In this case, if desired, a third bandage can be applied using the instructions outlined above.

For the purposes of tattoo aftercare, clear adhesive bandages can be worn for maximum of 7 days IN TOTAL.

Exposure to Water/Moisture While Wearing a Clear Adhesive Bandage

You can (and should) shower while wearing your clear adhesive bandage; however, it is best to keep showers short and sweet. Water, moisture, and sweat can weaken the adhesive, thus compromising the integrity of the bandage and making it susceptible to contaminants, which increases the risk of infection. Hot water and sweat in particular can pose a greater risk to the adhesion of the bandage and be irritating to the tattoo.

Taking this into consideration, it is in your best interest to keep your bandage dry and clean. Avoid activities such as long showers, baths, swimming, saunas, exercise that leads to excessive sweating, and any type of full or partial submersion of the bandage in water (or liquid of any kind for that matter).

After Removal of the Final Bandage

Your tattoo may appear to be mostly healed by the time you remove the final bandage, however it can take 6 weeks or longer for the deeper layers of skin to fully heal. Handpoked tattoos tend to heal faster than machine tattoos, but this can vary from person to person.

During this stage, continue washing your tattoo daily and keep the area moisturized and out of the sun. Do not start using sunscreen until the tattoo is fully healed.

Ink rejection or allergy

It is possible for the body to have an allergic reaction to the ink. This is rather uncommon with black and grey inks, and is more likely to occur with coloured inks. Reactions can manifest differently for different people, but the most common is a painful rash, with raised little bumps on the skin. Sometimes, it can be hard to identify as many of the symptoms are similar to those of the normal tattoo healing process. If you have concerns, it's best to seek medical attention and contact your artist.

A Few Reminders During the Healing Phase

Dos

- Make sure you have the appropriate aftercare supplies on hand, such as an unscented hypoallergenic soap, tattoo aftercare moisturizer, and fresh paper towels.
- Before washing your tattoo, always wash your hands first.
- Use clean paper towels to pat the tattoo dry.
- Allow your tattoo to air dry completely after patting it dry, and before applying moisturizer.
- Moisturize regularly, but not excessively.
- If your tattoo becomes sweaty or comes into contact with dirt or other substances, follow the washing instructions outlined above.
- Outside of washing, minimize the tattoo's contact with water.
- Drink a lot of water to promote healing and healthy, hydrated skin.
- Protect your healing tattoo from exposure to sunlight by keeping it covered with loose fitting clothing.

Don'ts

- Do not rub the area or use cloth towels to dry the tattoo.
- Do not over moisturize.
- Do not submerge the tattoo in water until it is fully healed.
- Do not pick or itch the scabs!
- No sweaty workouts for at least the first week.
- No saunas for the first 3 weeks.
- Do not expose your healing tattoo to sunlight.
- Do not use sunscreen on the area until the tattoo is fully healed.
- Outside of the aftercare supplies mentioned, do not use any other products on your tattoo while it is healing.
- Do not shave over the area (duh) until it is full healed.