

HEY DARLIN!

If you have a scheduled appointment with me on the books, I am sending this to you ahead of time!

It is my TATTOO AFTERCARE instructions. I apologize ahead of time for the novel, but the healing and care of your tattoo is my #1 priority, and your safety and comfort is next. I am constantly re-visiting old methods of healing and researching. I will admit, I AM NOT A DOCTOR, and this guide is not to replace the advice of your physician. However, over the years, I have seen what works and what doesn't, the most successfully, and I have tried to make it my job to UNDERSTAND WHY it works, and inform you, my client. I have painstakingly prepared this for you, so PLEASE READ IT! I have found if my CLIENT UNDERSTANDS what his/her body is trying to do, then the tattoos heal the best!!

Your body comes equipped with all of the things it needs to heal itself. AS SOON as I start tattooing you your body sends all kinds of things to the skin to begin the healing process. I have just poked a bazillion holes into your skin, your first line of defense, and your body has to bridge the gaps of those holes and repair itself. You will notice, when the tattoo is finished, that it leaks a clear-ish fluid after the vasoconstriction has halted the bleeding. This is not just plasma! It is fibrin, white blood cells, and an entire host of other things your body needs to build your new skin. In addition to this lymph process, the site will be feverish, warmer than the rest of your body, this temperature increase is important to the healing process. It kills bacteria, for one! If you do ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to your tattoo at this phase, it will still heal, although not very prettily! You most likely will scab! The scab will form when all this body goo you produce sticks together and dries out. Scabbing actually makes it take longer for your tattoo to heal, and it can also help to damage the tattoo. Scabs can be prone to cracking open, macerating (becoming too moist) and falling off too early, and when a scab comes off before the cells underneath have had a chance to do their job, you WILL LOSE COLOR! It will simply fall out!!

SO- you have to PREVENT YOUR TATTOO FROM SCABBING

To achieve the best possible results.

I am a firm believer of the moist healing environment.

It is your job to make sure that none of your body's natural goo is allowed to dry.

It is your job to prevent the onslaught of bacteria by protecting your tattoo and WASHING IT FREQUENTLY.

Do those two things, and your tattoo will heal beautifully!!

Aftercare method 1:

THE LAZY METHOD

Use a Tagederm bandage.

After I am finished with your tattoo and have washed it thoroughly, I can apply the tagederm bandage of your choice. Here are links to a couple who developed it in sizes large enough to span decent sized tattoos. I do not provide my clients with this.

Tattoo Tegaderm Product Links

<http://www.saniderm.com/>

<http://www.tatuderm.com/>

I say this is the lazy method, because it is almost 100% fool proof. After your tattoo is clean and dry, I would apply the bandage. In 24 hours or so, a significant amount of lymph fluid will build up underneath. It will look like chocolate milk sometimes!! (GROSS!!) It is ok to take this bandage off, wash very well with antibacterial soap, rinse well, and dry completely before re-bandaging with new derm. This derm change can stay on 3-5 days. After the bandage is removed, there should be no more lymph process happening, and you can switch to washing a few times a day, and using an ointment or lotion of your choice.

Pros and Cons:

Good thing about using a derm product is that you don't have to take care of your tattoo. Its covered, waterproof, flexible, etc. It is a barrier against the onslaught of germs in the outside world, its moist healing environment can speed the healing process.

The downside is that half of my clients that use these products have reactions to the adhesives, and can break out in terrible rashes. Also, because the skin that is not affected by being tattooed is occluded (covered by the bandage) it can cause the irritation and possible hair follicle infection.

Aftercare method 2:

WRAP METHOD

Contrary to popular belief, Saran Wrap, or Cellophane/ Cling film is not a fully occlusive wrapping. That means it is not a water tight/air tight bandage. Oxygen can and WILL get to the wound site.

No, cling film is not Sterile. It does not need to be.

After I tattoo you, I will wash your tattoo and wrap it in cling film. With nothing on it. In a few hours, take it off, and wash it thoroughly with antibacterial soap. Get a good lather with warm water. Do not be shy or chicken about it. For the first few hours, I am not against a paper towel being used to wash it. The tooth on the paper towel is helpful in removing the lymph that can possibly dry on your tattoo. After it is dry, wrap it.

Repeat this process until your skin stops producing the lymph fluid. This can take between 24-72 hours depending on your body, the location of your tattoo, and the size of your tattoo.

Obviously you cannot do this while you sleep and that is ok. Just do it before bed, and immediately when you get up.

Tape the saran wrap to prevent slipping.

After your skin stops producing fluid, stop wrapping it. Start using ointment or lotion of your choice, and you don't have to wash as often.

It is normal for your tattoo to peel and look funky.

Pros and Cons

Cling film is not sterile, but washing frequently will negate this.

It is a pain in the ass to wrap your tattoo. Sometimes people have reactions to being wrapped, by being too hot, or not washing often enough and have broke out in rashes or red bumps.

It is a barrier to the outside world, and can prevent outside pathogens.

If the entire area being wrapped is not clean, and the wrap is on too long, it can become a bacteria terrarium, and actually help your tattoo to become infected.

It provides a moist healing environment, which has shown to speed up healing time significantly.

Aftercare method 3:

Old fashioned

After you take the wrap off your tattoo for the first time, wash thoroughly with anti-bacterial soap and warm water.

Pat dry or Air dry, and apply an ointment of your choice in a VERY THIN LAYER. You wouldn't slather lotion on and leave it all greasy, don't do that to your tattoo. Whatever you use, RUB IT ALL THE WAY IN.

You will notice after a time, your tattoo will be greasy. This is the lymph process pushing your ointment out. Wash the tattoo and repeat the process.

Watch out for hairs, dust, chunky bits, etc for sticking to your tattoo. Also, do not allow clothing or sheets to stick to your tattoo. If you notice you have something stuck to it, go immediately to a sink or shower, and COMPLETELY SOAK the clothing before trying to remove it. You could actually rip out part of your tattoo.

When your body stops producing lymph, you can switch to a mild lotion of your choice.

I do not recommend this healing process because you have a higher chance of scabbing this way, but all it is, is common sense.

Alternately, If you don't want to cover your tattoo all day, use this method, and just cover it at night when you are asleep. That way you are less likely to have dried fluid bits in the morning, which WILL NOT WASH OFF AND ARE PRE-SCABS, and it will keep you from sticking to your jammies or sheets.

DOs and DON'Ts

DO take a shower. Seriously. I CANNOT STRESS this washing thing enough!!! It is AMAZING to wash your tattoo frequently, and this is even in the shower!!

DON'T soak in the tub, or a hot tub, or go swimming in a pool, or a lake, or a stream, or a creek, etc.

DO show your friends and family

DON'T let them touch it with their dirty little hands. And Don't touch a new tattoo with your own dirty ass hands!! Wash them first please!

DO lotion your tattoo when it is dry and flaky

DON'T pick it. Some of the flakes can be attached to healing skin that isn't ready to fall off. You could risk pulling off something you don't want to!

DO smack your tattoo if it gets itchy.

DON'T scratch it. Sometimes standing under the shower can relieve the itch, and it will get rid of any flakes that are ready to come off too!!

DON'T go camping right after your tattoo! Or do any kind of activity that limits your ability to care for it.

DON'T let your dog lick it! Limit your tattoo's exposure to animals. You can pick up all sorts of nasties.

Be aware of your surroundings. Don't lean a new forearm tattoo on a shopping cart. Your vehicles are covered in germs, be aware a leg tattoo can touch the car seat! Your arms the arm rests and seats.

Your clothes and skin are covered in bacteria! So have some common sense and WASH YOUR TATTOO!!! OFTEN!! Every 4-5 hours is a good rule.

Recommended Products

Tatuderm, Saniderm for Tegaderm bandage

Cling Film, Medical Tape

Dial Gold Pump soap for Anti-Bacterial soap

Eucarin Aquaphor, Vitamin A&D, and Bacitracin for ointment*

Lubriderm, Curel, Aveeno for lotion

Very informative wound healing information

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wound_healing

<http://www.childrenscentralcal.org/PressRoom/Publications/NursingExcellence9/Pages/OptimizingWoundHealingEnvironment.aspx>

*warning for those with contact dermatitis to possible allergic reaction to bacitracin

http://www.cutis.com/fileadmin/qhi_archive/ArticlePDF/CT/076020105.pdf