

## MCLA Health Services

375 Church Street  
North Adams, MA 01247  
413-664-5421



## Self Care Sheet

### Infected Piercing and Body Art

Most piercings and body art are safe if done properly by a professional using sterilized tools, however there are many factors that can lead to problems and infection. Bacterial infections most often occur when the site is contaminated when touching with unwashed hands. In some cases oral or topical antibiotics may be required. Hepatitis B can be transmitted by nonsterile needles. Allergic reactions to certain metals in the jewelry or rarely to inks can occur. Healing time varies from up to 12 months for the belly button and nipple, nasal septum 4-9 months, nose 2-4 months and 6-8 weeks for the eye brow, ear lobe and labia.

#### **How do I know if the reaction is serious?**

- ⇒ If the fluid is thick, green or foul smelling. Any body art may initially ooze thin clear fluids which is normal.
- ⇒ If the surrounding skin is warm or hot to the touch a bacterial infection may be present.
- ⇒ If the surrounding skin is red, swollen and increasingly painful a bacterial infection or allergic reaction may be present.
- ⇒ Itching, burning or irritation around the site may indicate that you are using the wrong aftercare product.

#### **Home Care and Prevention**

- ⇒ Never get a piercing, tattoo or branding from a non professional.
- ⇒ Only get body art done when you're in good mental and physical health.
- ⇒ Avoid touching new body art/piercing sites with unwashed hands.
- ⇒ Follow aftercare instructions exactly as written.
- ⇒ Use only high quality jewelry in piercings.
- ⇒ Do not remove a piercing if you have signs and symptoms of an infection.
- ⇒ Avoid using anti-bacterial ointments on piercings.

**Follow up at Health Services for further evaluation and treatment.  
Seek medical attention sooner if concern for any serious reactions.**