

What is a keloid and why do I have one?

Keloids are a formation of scar tissue around a piercing caused by the body over-defending itself as a result of the perceived trauma. Up to 6% of piercings will develop a keloid at some time. The risk is 19 times greater in African American skin and is more common with ethnic skin. Keloids can be related to melanin in the skin and are also genetic. Keloids are also much more common and typically seen in cartilage tissue, although it can occur in any tissue. Even though a piercing is a controlled procedure, anyone can develop a keloid. When a piercing heals, your body creates a tube of tissue around the jewelry called a fistula. Any irritation of the fistula or the surrounding tissue can cause keloids. Because your body is healing, it's regenerating the tissue in the area to rebuild any damage, and a keloid occurs when it regenerates too much. So, it is important to avoid sweating, perfume, dirt, cosmetics and hair products from coming into contact with your piercing, or even simply touching your piercing, especially during the piercings healing period. Sometimes keloids can occur with just one piercing, even when the person has had multiple piercings that have never caused problems. It's important to note that keloids can also form on most, if not all piercings, on some people that are genetically predisposed to having keloids.

What can I do to get rid of it?

There are a couple different ways to get rid of a keloid. We can advise you on which method to attempt first, otherwise start with the mildest. If the first is unsuccessful try a stronger method.

1. Use one drop of aroma-therapy grade Tea Tree oil on a Q-tip.
 - Clean area around keloid with a non-scented antibacterial soap first.
 - Apply oil to keloid 2 times a day.
 - *Tea Tree oil is a strong antiseptic and can be drying to the skin, use sparingly and try to keep it only on the keloid.

Continue this treatment for at least 2-4 weeks. If you don't see an improvement, you can try the second method listed below. It is normally ineffective, but we've included it as another option to try, since you will most likely need to have it surgically removed if the tea tree oil doesn't work.

2. Take 1 tsp of sea salt and mix with 1 cup warm water.
 - Soak piercing for 5-15 minutes a day, once a day.
 - Rinse piercing well with warm water.

If you have tried both of these treatments with no noticeable results and the keloid continues to bother you, please see your dermatologist and discuss removal methods with them.

Consult a health care professional at the first sign of infection.

Symptoms of an infection can include: fever, redness, particularly if it spreads or forms a red streak, swelling or heat in the affected area, excessive pain or tenderness, and/or pus draining from or around the piercing. Follow all aftercare to reduce the risk of infections. Some people have sensitivities to metals and the appearance of a metal allergy and an infection are often very similar. If your piercing is in constant discomfort, has a discharge, is reddened beyond the first week without a causable factor, or simply doesn't feel "right" consult a health care professional. If a health care professional is unable to help or says that it is an allergic reaction and you need different jewelry, we are always glad to assist.

Do Not Touch Your New Piercing Unless You Are Cleaning It!