

Tattoo Aftercare Guide

Healing your new tattoo with Tattoo Armour

Last updated: 13 October 2026

Had our Tattoo Armour guide before? Please read this version again. It has been expanded with new advice on hygiene, changing your aftercare pads and aftercare once you stop using them.

A one-page **quick reference** of your daily routine is on the end.

1 Right after your session

Your new tattoo has already been covered with a Tattoo Armour aftercare pad. **Leave this first pad on for 6–8 hours.**

Tattooed in the evening? Change the pad before you go to bed, even if 6 hours haven't passed yet. That way your skin isn't sitting in the fluid collected in the pad all night.

Sleep in clean bedding on the first night. You don't need to change all your bedding every day – the point is that your fresh tattoo shouldn't touch sheets you've already been sleeping in for a while, or sheets stained with blood or fluid from the tattoo.

Why cover it at night?

A tattoo that is still bleeding or weeping plasma needs to stay covered while you sleep. Otherwise the fluid soaks into your sheets and your healing skin keeps touching it again. It's like taking a dirty dressing off a wound and putting the same one back on hours later.

2 How to change your aftercare pad

Follow these steps **every time** you change your aftercare pad – the first time and every time after that.

- 1 Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- 2 Carefully remove the old pad. Don't worry if the fluid it has soaked up looks like a print of your tattoo – that's completely normal.
- 3 The pad usually doesn't stick to the skin. If it does, **don't pull it off by force**. Take it off in the shower, soaking it bit by bit with warm (not hot) water until it comes away easily.
- 4 Wash the tattoo with warm (not hot) water and a mild, fragrance-free soap.
- 5 Pat it dry with a clean, disposable paper towel only – **never a cloth towel**.
- 6 Apply a **very thin** layer of tattoo aftercare cream – just enough to lightly cover the surface. A thick, greasy layer won't help it heal faster.
- 7 Put on a new aftercare pad, covering the whole tattoo plus a small margin of healthy skin around it.
- 8 If needed, secure the edges with medical tape.

3 The next few days: your aftercare pad routine

After the first night, aim for roughly this rhythm, using the steps from section 2 each time:

Morning	Fresh pad to start the day.
During the day	Change it again around midday or after work.
Before bed	Fresh pad for the night.

Change it more often if it's soaked through with fluid, gets dirty, shifts, starts peeling off or no longer protects the tattoo properly. **Always use a brand-new pad** – never put an old one back on.

How long should I use the aftercare pads?

It depends on the tattoo: its size, how heavily the skin was worked, how much it bleeds and weeps, where it is on your body, how quickly your skin heals and the conditions you're in over the next few days.

- **Smaller, lighter tattoos:** about 2 days is usually enough.
- **Larger, heavily saturated or intensively worked pieces** that weep for longer: usually 3–4 days.
- **Dusty, dirty or otherwise unhygienic workplace:** you can keep using it for longer to protect the tattoo from your surroundings.

This never means wearing one pad for days – keep changing it for a fresh one as described above.

4 Aftercare once the pads come off

Once the tattoo has stopped weeping plasma and no longer needs a pad, switch to regular aftercare. **Each time you apply cream:**

- 1 Wash your hands thoroughly.
- 2 Wash the tattoo with warm (not hot) water and a mild, fragrance-free soap.
- 3 Pat it dry with a clean, disposable paper towel.
- 4 Apply a very thin layer of cream.

Apply cream **2–3 times a day**. As the tattoo heals, you can gradually do it less often. Keep this up for about **10–14 days**, or until the skin has fully healed.

Use the cream your artist gave you or recommended, or a product you've used before that your tattoos have always healed well with. **Don't put perfumed products or anything containing alcohol** on the healing tattoo.

Optional: switch to a tattoo butter

When the peeling is nearly over, you can switch from your aftercare cream to a tattoo butter if you like. It isn't a must – just a nice way to keep the skin soft and nourished for the last stretch of healing. The same rules apply: clean hands, washed skin and a thin layer.

Keep your cream clean

Once your fingers have touched the fresh tattoo, they may have plasma, blood or other fluid on them. Don't touch the tip of the tube or dip those fingers back into the jar of cream or balm. Instead, take out the amount you need **beforehand** with a clean finger, a clean glove or a disposable spatula. If you need more, wash your hands again first (or put on a fresh pair of gloves). That way you won't contaminate a product you'll keep using for days.

If someone helps you

If your tattoo is somewhere hard to reach, like your back, and someone else helps with aftercare, they should wash their hands thoroughly and then put on clean, disposable gloves before every contact with the tattoo. The gloves go on right before aftercare – don't touch any other surfaces or objects with them first.

5 Keeping things clean at home

Wash your hands before every time you touch, wash or cream the tattoo or change its pad. Everything that comes into contact with your fresh tattoo – hands, pads, clothes, bedding, paper towels and aftercare products – should be as clean as possible.

- Store everything you use to wash, dry and care for the tattoo in a clean place.
- Keep a separate roll of paper towels just for the tattoo – not the open kitchen roll everyone uses for everything.
- Don't keep paper towels, creams or other aftercare products right next to the toilet, where tiny droplets can spray into the air every time it's flushed.

6 Clothes and bedding

Wear clean, breathable clothes that don't press on or rub the fresh tattoo.

For the first few days, **don't put yesterday's clothes back on over the tattoo** – especially if it wasn't covered or the pad slipped. The fabric may have picked up blood, plasma, sweat and dirt, and your healing tattoo shouldn't touch it again.

The same goes for bedding: if it gets stained with blood or fluid, make sure that spot doesn't touch your tattooed skin again.

7 Pets

Don't let your dog, cat or any other pet have direct contact with your fresh tattoo – no touching, rubbing against it or licking.

In the first few days, also keep them from sleeping right next to the tattoo or on the bedding around it. If your pets normally sleep in your bed, it's especially important that your bedding is clean and your tattoo is properly covered.

8 What to avoid while it heals

Showering	Normal warm showers are fine – the water doesn't need to be cool or lukewarm, just not very hot. Avoid long, hot, steamy showers and don't let the tattoo soak for long.
Exercise	For the first 7–10 days , avoid intense workouts, the gym and contact sports – especially anything that makes you sweat a lot or causes friction, dirt or pressure on the tattoo.
Swimming & soaking	No pool, sea or lake for at least 3–4 weeks , and in any case not until the skin has fully healed. The same goes for saunas, hot tubs and long baths.
Sun	No sunbathing or tanning beds for at least 4 weeks .
Scratching	Don't scratch, pick or peel flaking skin or scabs – let them come off on their own.

9 Normal healing or a problem?

A healing tattoo can look worrying even when everything is fine. **If you're unsure, message us first** – ideally with a clear photo in daylight. We'll tell you whether it's normal healing or whether you should see a doctor.

Usually normal in the first days

- Redness, slight swelling, warmth and tenderness around the tattoo, easing day by day.
- Clear or slightly yellowish fluid (plasma), sometimes with a little ink in it.
- Itching, flaking and peeling, and a dull or cloudy look while the skin renews.
- After a longer session or a bigger piece: feeling a little feverish or shivery for a few hours. This usually passes the same day or by the next morning.

Message us if

- Redness, swelling or pain gets **worse** after the first 2–3 days instead of better.
- Thick, yellow or green discharge, or a bad smell.
- Hard, raised lumps, blisters, or a rash or bumps on or around the tattoo.
- Fever or chills that last beyond the day after your session, or that start later.
- Anything else you're not sure about.

Questions?

Anything else on your mind about your new tattoo? Just get in touch – we're happy to help.

Thank you for trusting us!

The Flow The Needle team

Quick reference

Your daily routine at a glance

Aftercare pad phase

- **First pad:** leave on for 6–8 hours. Tattooed in the evening? Change it before bed.
- **After that:** a fresh pad about 3 times a day – morning, midday/after work, and before bed.
- **Each change:** wash hands → remove pad → wash tattoo → pat dry with paper towel → very thin cream → fresh pad.
- **How long:** usually about 2 days; up to 3–4 days for larger or heavily worked tattoos.

After the pads

- Every time: wash → pat dry → very thin layer of cream.
- 2–3 times a day, less often as it heals, for about 10–14 days or until fully healed.
- Optional: when the peeling is nearly over, you can switch to a tattoo butter.
- Unsure if something is normal? Message us first, with a photo.

Every day

- Water: warm, never hot.
- Cream: always a very thin layer.
- No perfumed or alcohol-based products on the tattoo.
- Clean hands, always. Someone helping? Clean hands + disposable gloves.
- Don't touch the tube or jar with fingers that have touched the fresh tattoo.
- Clean clothes, clean bedding, clean paper towels.
- No pets touching or licking the fresh tattoo.

Avoid while healing

- No pool, lake, sea, hot tub, sauna or long soaks until fully healed (swimming: at least 3–4 weeks).
- No intense exercise or contact sports for 7–10 days.
- No sunbathing or tanning beds for at least 4 weeks.
- No scratching or picking at flakes and scabs.