

THE LITTLE BLACK NEEDLE

Tattoo Aftercare Instructions

Studio: Martink's Tattoo Studio, Unit 5 Wren Industrial Estate, Coldred Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9YT

Email: thelittleblackneedle@gmail.com | Instagram: @thelittleblackneedle | Contact form at www.thelittleblackneedle.co.uk

If you are unsure about any part of your aftercare, contact the studio for general guidance. For medical concerns, worsening symptoms, suspected infection, allergic reaction, or feeling unwell, seek medical advice from a GP, NHS 111, urgent treatment centre, A&E, or 999 where urgent.

Important: A new tattoo is an open wound. Please read and follow these instructions carefully. Failure to follow aftercare can increase the risk of infection, scarring, poor healing, colour loss, fading, patchy healing, or the need for a touch-up. These instructions are general guidance only and are not a substitute for medical advice.

First 24–48 Hours

- Wash your hands before touching your tattoo or dressing.
- If cling film / standard wrap has been applied, keep it on for around 3–4 hours or until you get home. Do not re-wrap with cling film unless your artist specifically tells you to.
- If second skin / breathable film has been applied, keep it on for the time advised by your artist. This is usually 24–48 hours and sometimes up to 3–5 days. Do not wash the tattoo while the film is in place.
- Remove the dressing slowly. If it sticks, use lukewarm running water. Never pull harshly.
- After removing the dressing, rinse the tattoo under lukewarm water, clean gently with fragrance-free soap using fingertips only, rinse fully, pat dry with a clean paper towel, then air dry for 5–10 minutes.
- If second skin leaks, lifts significantly, causes irritation, or fluid pools heavily, remove it under lukewarm water and begin the cleaning routine.

Cleaning Routine: Days 1–14

- Clean the tattoo 2–3 times daily: morning, evening, and after sweating, exercise, or anything dirtying the area.
- Use lukewarm water and a small amount of mild fragrance-free soap. Use fingertips only. Do not scrub.
- Pat dry with a fresh clean paper towel. Do not use towels, flannels, sponges, loofahs, or reusable cloths.

- Let the tattoo air dry for around 5 minutes before applying aftercare product.
- Second skin users should start this routine only after the film is fully removed.
- Brief showers are fine. Do not soak the tattoo or hold it directly under strong water pressure.

Moisturising

- Do not moisturise during the first 24 hours unless your artist advises otherwise.
- From Day 2, apply a very thin layer of suitable tattoo aftercare balm or another fragrance-free product recommended by your artist.
- The tattoo should look barely moisturised, not shiny or greasy. Over-moisturising can cause breakouts, blurred fine lines, and poor healing.
- Apply 2–3 times daily, or when the skin feels tight or dry. Continue for at least 4 weeks.
- Stop using any product that causes irritation, rash, burning, or worsening redness. Contact the studio for general aftercare guidance, but seek medical advice where symptoms are significant, worsening, or concerning.

Do Not Use

- Do not use scented shower gels, perfumes, alcohol gels, hand sanitiser, exfoliants, retinol, AHA/BHA acids, baby oil, or mineral oil products on the healing tattoo.
- Do not use Vaseline/petroleum jelly unless specifically advised by a medical professional, as it can trap moisture and interfere with healing.
- Do not use sunscreen on the tattoo until it is fully surface-healed, usually at least 4–6 weeks.
- Do not apply numbing cream, anaesthetic creams, or medicated creams to the healing tattoo unless advised by a medical professional.

Avoid During Healing

- Do not pick, scratch, peel, rub, or shave over the tattoo until fully surface-healed.
- Do not use baths, swimming pools, hot tubs, saunas, steam rooms, open water, or soaking for at least 4 weeks.
- Avoid direct sunlight and sunbeds for at least 4–6 weeks. Cover the tattoo with loose clean clothing outdoors.
- Avoid intense exercise and heavy sweating for 5–7 days. Clean the tattoo immediately after any sweating.
- Wear loose, clean clothing and avoid friction on the tattoo.
- Keep pets away from the tattoo. Animal fur, saliva, and dander can carry bacteria.
- Do not let anyone else touch your fresh tattoo.
- Use clean bedding and avoid sleeping directly on the tattoo where possible during the first few nights.

Placement / Tattoo Type Notes

- Fine line / blackwork: use very small amounts of moisturiser. Lines may look raised, blurry, light, or broken during early healing; this usually settles.

- Colour tattoos: colours can heal at different rates. Reds, yellows, greens, whites, and pastels may be more reactive and need careful sun protection once healed.
- Large pieces: expect more swelling, tenderness, tiredness, and plasma in the first 24–72 hours. Rest, hydrate, eat well, wear loose clothing, and elevate limbs where helpful.
- Hands, fingers, feet, elbows, knees, wrists, and joints: high-movement and high-friction areas may heal slower, lose more ink, fade, blur, and may need a touch-up. Minimise movement and keep very clean.
- If numbing cream was used: skin may feel more sensitive and may produce slightly more plasma in the first 12–24 hours. Be especially gentle.

Normal Healing

- Normal healing may include mild redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness, and clear or slightly blood-tinged plasma during the first few days.
- Dryness, tightness, itching, light scabbing, flaking, and the tattoo looking dull or cloudy during peeling can also be normal.
- Do not pick or pull flakes or scabs. Let them fall away naturally.
- Check your tattoo daily during healing so you can notice any worsening redness, swelling, discharge, rash, or other changes.
- Fresh tattoos may look darker, sharper, brighter, or more defined than the healed result. Healed tattoos may soften, lighten, blur slightly, fade, or heal unevenly.

Seek Medical Help

Contact your GP, NHS 111, urgent treatment centre, or A&E/999 where urgent if you notice:

- redness, heat, swelling, or pain that worsens after Day 3 instead of improving;
- yellow/green pus;
- unpleasant odour;
- severe throbbing pain;
- fever or chills;
- red streaks;
- swollen lymph nodes;
- raised itchy bumps, rash, hives, blistering, or swelling mainly in one ink colour, especially if it appears days or weeks later;
- severe facial/throat swelling or difficulty breathing;
- bleeding that does not stop after firm pressure with clean gauze or a clean paper towel.

Call 999 immediately for severe facial/throat swelling or difficulty breathing.

The studio can provide general aftercare guidance, but suspected infection, allergic reaction or worsening symptoms should be assessed by a healthcare professional.

Do not delay seeking medical advice if symptoms are worsening or you feel unwell.

Long-Term Care

- Once fully surface-healed, protect exposed tattoos with SPF 50+ sunscreen whenever outdoors. UV exposure is a major cause of fading.
- Keep healed tattoos moisturised with a fragrance-free lotion or balm.
- All tattoos naturally fade, soften, and change over time due to sun exposure, ageing, skin type, lifestyle, and individual healing response.
- Contact the studio within 6 months if you think a touch-up may be needed, subject to the studio's touch-up policy.

Contact

Contact Form at www.thelittleblackneedle.co.uk

Email: thelittleblackneedle@gmail.com

Instagram: [@thelittleblackneedle](https://www.instagram.com/thelittleblackneedle) — general queries only, not urgent medical concerns.

NHS non-emergency: call 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk

Emergency: call 999 or attend A&E

Thank you for choosing The Little Black Needle. Look after your tattoo and it will look after you.