

Westcoast Piercing and Ink

Branding Info and Aftercare Guidelines

Branding is a form of scarification, applied with a heated material (usually metal) to the skin, making a serious burn that eventually becomes a scar. A healed branding looks like a pattern of thick raised lines that can be slightly lighter or darker than your skin color (when fully healed). The outcome from branding will differ from person to person, as it is an organic modification rather than an exact one like tattoos or piercing. Raising, keloiding or pitting results will differ with location, skin type, body fat, care, etc. For many, the reason for branding is based more on the actual experience, rather than on the end result.

We provide three types of branding services:

Fire Direct

Fire Direct is achieved by allowing Tibetan incense, pine needles or moxa to burn into the skin. It can leave deep, distinctive circles 2-4mm larger than the incense. During the process, you can expect a slow heat sensation as the incense gains more heat and then drops off. Some have said it put them into a deep trance while others have described it as a "superbly transcending feeling".

Multi-Strike

This is the process of using red hot metal pieces, pressed into the skin repeatedly to form a design. Initially, it creates deep, sharp trenches from each strike. The lines can be straight or curved, up to 1" long and will appear approx. 2-3mm wide and heal to approx. 6-8mm wide. This method requires careful planning to execute more intricate designs.

Multi-strike is a flash of intense heat that subsides very quickly. Some have said during larger applications it creates a hypnotic trance-like feeling. This process is often accompanied by soothing, rhythmic sounds.

Electro-Cautery

This branding technique uses a medical cautery unit and is far less primitive. It looks like a pen that has a tip that heats up, and is used to literally draw the branding on. It is the best method for finer, more detailed designs and is generally not as deep as strike brands. Initial lines will be 1-3mm and heals to 2-5mm wide. The designs are done in passes of up to 1" at a time. The sensation of Cautery branding is similar to a tattoo or a 5 minute Fire Direct sitting, done in 5 seconds. It is typically not as conducive to ritual as strike or fire direct branding.

If you have any further questions feel free to call (604) 584·BODY (2639)

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"Celebrate the Most Precious Thing you'll ever own ... your BODY!"

A brand hurts less than you'd think. Most of the pain in branding is psychological. A brand cauterises skin and will strike exposed nerve endings (the body's pain receptors). It only hurts for a second until the nerves are burned, unlike a burn on the stove, which burns the surface. However, the endorphin rush can be extreme. During the healing period the brand can be very sore, more so on a body part which flexes.

A brand takes a long time to heal and can look scary for a while. Brands go through a few phases of healing, which will differ depending on the size and branding style chosen. First they go through a scabby phase where they look like a horrible wound. Then they heal as a bright red scar which slowly becomes pinker, and then most commonly slightly lighter than normal skin color. Initial healing is often between 4-8 weeks and full healing generally is around six months,

There are two main schools of thought as to the aftercare of scarification. Many artists believe that a LITHA ("leave it the hell alone") method is best. By leaving it alone, the body will generally heal a fairly consistent wound. The downside of this method is that if the person's genetics are not prone to keloiding, the amount of raised scar may be fairly minimal.

A brand is actually a burn, (generally 2nd - 3rd degree). The recommended burn therapy that still stands as the best after-care for branding, is to not cover it, leaving it exposed to the air. If the skin peels away then it may be advisable to cover the lesion to prevent infection. A saline bath is also helpful.

The other school of thought on scarification aftercare is to irritate the wound (using a variety of methods ranging from simply picking the scab, to softening with water and lightly scrubbing with a NEW CLEAN toothbrush, to using chemical and exfoliant formulas. Irritating a healing scar will greatly increase the amount of scarring, but at the same time, almost always leads to inconsistent scarring (that is, different parts of the scar will raise different amounts).

There are a few standard aftercare rules for branding:

DO's:

- Keep the area clean and free from debris. (lint can stick and make for nasty healing)
- After bathing, ensure you 'pat dry' the piece with a clean, lint free cloth, do not rub, as this can cause the scar to heal unevenly
- Drink lots of water and pay attention to your diet throughout the healing process. Hydration is key to safe, fast healing
- At your discretion, anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen or arnica may be used for inflammation or pain management - please follow the manufacturer's instructions

DONT's:

- Avoid all skin creams and moisturizers including artificial tanning products
- Avoid all petroleum based aftercare products
- Avoid wearing tight clothing over your healing branding
- Avoid soaking in the bath or swimming pools for long periods, throughout the entire healing process. Oversaturation for extended periods is the biggest culprit for more uneven healing
- Avoid excessive movement in the area as this could encourage the scar to stretch or tear; which can be painful around the outside edges of the healing brand
- Avoid sun exposure on your branding (including sun beds)