



## Skin Piercing Guide

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1982 requires persons who practice acupuncture, tattooing, semi-permanent skin colouring, cosmetic piercing, and electrolysis to be registered with the Local Authority. In addition, these activities should only be undertaken in registered premises. Applications for registration should be made to the Community Services.

The Local Authority has also passed bylaws for the purpose of securing:

- \* the cleanliness of the premises registered;
- \* the cleanliness of persons undertaking skin piercing;
- \* the cleanliness and sterilisation of instruments, materials and equipment.

The information contained within these guidance notes will assist practitioners of skin piercing to comply with the bylaws and prevent the transmission of infection.

### Premises

A skin piercer's premises must be clean and be capable of being kept clean. All internal parts of the structure of the premises should be maintained in a clean condition and kept in proper repair. Wallpaper should not be used as a wall covering unless it is a durable, washable type. The surface of the floor should be smooth, impervious and continuous.

A wash hand basin with a hot and cold water supply properly connected to the drainage system is essential and should be located in the workroom.

*Note:* water heaters of the 'top-up' type are not permitted. It is preferable for the taps to be foot or elbow operated. Soap, preferably in liquid form, and an approved hygienic means of drying hands must be available and readily accessible. Such hand drying facilities include disposable paper towels or hot-air dryers.

### Table tops and other working surfaces

The table tops, shelves and other working surfaces must have a smooth impervious surface (preferably stainless steel or glass), be in good repair and kept clean with the frequent use (at least after each client) of a suitable disinfectant. Shelves, cabinets, cupboards etc., must contain only the equipment that is used in connection with the business of skin piercing.

## Chairs, seats or couches

The surface of any chair, seat or couch should have a smooth impervious surface such as vinyl, and be in good repair. It should be kept clean and washed with detergent and hot water regularly. Patients should sit or lie on a disposable paper sheet rather than on the bare surface. Fabric chairs should not be used.

## Ventilation

A well-ventilated room must be used.

## Artificial lighting

Artificial lighting must be adequate and maintained.

## Disposal of equipment

Needles should be placed in an approved yellow plastic 'sharps' disposal box such as is used in hospitals. The box should be clearly marked:

**'DANGER, CONTAMINATED SHARPS ONLY. TO BE INCINERATED'.**

### Waste material

Any waste matter contaminated by blood or body fluids e.g. swabs, paper towels, tissues etc. must be disposed of in an approved yellow plastic clinical waste sack, or clearly marked:

**BIOHAZARD, CLINICAL WASTE ONLY. TO BE INCINERATED**

Small items, e.g. swabs, tissues etc., may be placed in the approved sharps box instead. Waste matter not contaminated with blood or body fluids should be disposed of in a suitable receptacle lined with a leakproof sealable plastic bag and provided with a close-fitting lid.

Used disinfectants must be carefully poured down the sink after use and flushed with running water.

The advice of the local Environmental Health Officer must be sought about the final disposal of the sealed bags and sharps disposal boxes from the premises (see the important notice regarding sharps box and clinical waste disposal).

## Disinfection

Disinfectants are necessary where it is not practicable to sterilise equipment and instruments. They do not sterilise (kill all germs) but their proper use will reduce the number of germs to the extent that they pose little danger of infection. The disinfectant usually used is hypochlorite, which will neutralise most viruses, especially the Hepatitis ones. Hypochlorite can corrode metals and therefore prolonged contact with metals should be avoided.

Solutions of hypochlorite need to be made up each day. Manufacturers' instructions regarding the correct concentrations should be strictly followed.

Disinfectants other than those indicated here may be used, but they would not necessarily be better or cheaper than the ones recommended. It is better to familiarise oneself with only one or two disinfectants. Not all disinfectants are equally destructive against germs. For example, even high strengths of alcohol used as disinfectants have only a weak effect on destroying the Hepatitis B virus, however the frequent use of 'wet wipes' containing isopropyl alcohol or ethanol may prove useful for general disinfecting of surfaces etc.

## Preparation and use of disinfectants

Agent	Preparation	Uses
Hypochlorite e.g., Domestos, Melzone.	Make up daily add 50 millilitres of hypochlorite to 1 litre of cold water.	Excellent for wiping and cleaning all materials. Avoid prolonged exposure with Metals.

*Note:* Hypochlorite is sensitive to light and to water quality - follow manufacturers' instructions carefully regarding storage.

## Sterilisation

Disinfectants do not sterilise; they only reduce the number of bacteria. All chemicals should be treated as disinfectants. They are, however, useful for treating surfaces and equipment that cannot be sterilised, e.g. work surfaces, the 'motors' or frames used in tattooing, and ear piercing guns.

The best means of avoiding cross-infection is to use sterile disposable equipment where available, in preference to other types.

## Methods of sterilisation

Autoclaves are used to sterilise instruments with pressurised steam. They should be fitted with temperature/pressure gauges to enable the correct time/temperatures to be observed. Domestic pressure cookers are unsuitable for this purpose as there is no accurate way of telling when the correct temperature/pressure has been reached.

The instruments that are to be autoclaved must be scrupulously clean as the steam has to be completely in contact with the surface of the instrument. The advantages of autoclaves are that they are quick and

efficient, and that because of the comparatively lower temperature and shorter time necessary for sterilisation they are less likely to cause damage to delicate instruments.

Autoclaves should be subjected to regular inspection and preventative maintenance by a competent person, and evidence of the maintenance should be kept for inspection.

Dry heat ovens can also be used to sterilise equipment. However, they are liable to damage fine needles. Dry heat is also likely to be less efficient as a method of sterilisation as there could be cold spots within the oven.

## **Health & Personal Hygiene**

### **Health of the skin piercer**

A skin piercer must ensure that his or her own health, including personal hygiene, does not endanger in any way the health of a client.

A high standard of personal hygiene is essential. Hands must be washed before and after treating each client. All cuts and wounds must be washed and dressed with a waterproof dressing immediately.

The practitioner should wear clean, washable or disposable clothing while carrying out his or her practice. Practitioners must refrain from smoking, eating or drinking whilst engaged on a treatment. Nails must be kept short and clean. A first aid kit, the contents of which should comply with the requirements of the Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, must be kept on the premises and should also be available for the use of clients.

A skin piercer who is suffering from an infectious disease can transmit germs to his or her client in various ways, including through breaks and punctures in the skin during treatment. Consult your GP early about any personal illness that may be of an infectious nature. Ensure that the GP knows that you are engaged in the business of skin piercing.

Medical advice should always be sought if a cut is sustained whilst the apparatus is being used on a client.

### **Health of the client**

Ensure that the part of the body to be treated is clean and free of any cuts, wounds or disease.

It is important to remember that a client may be unaware of a condition they may have. Accordingly procedures should be such that with every piercing contamination is prevented.

It is essential to ensure if the client has a history of Hepatitis that he or she is not currently suffering from it. In such cases, consideration should be given to not treating the client because of the high risks involved. Treatment should not be given until the client has consulted his or her GP as to any possible infective state.

The areas to be pierced should be cleaned at the start of the treatment with an alcohol-impregnated swab. Other cleaning agents, if used, should also have adequate disinfectant properties. Medical attention may be necessary if a treated part becomes inflamed or infected.

Immediately before use, any paper or other disposable material used as a covering on a chair, seat or couch, and any towel, cloth or other article which is applied to the client's skin should be clean and not have been used in connection with any other client.

## **Transmission Of Bloodborne Viruses By Skin Piercing**

When a needle, razor or other similar instrument breaks a person's skin, blood, serum or small fragments of tissue will adhere to the needle or instrument used. These can then be directly transferred to the blood stream of another person, or could contaminate materials or other pieces of equipment. These contaminated materials or pieces of equipment may also transmit infection if they come into direct contact with any broken skin of the next customer.

The blood or serum may not be visible but they are still capable of transmitting infection.

## **Viral Infections Transmitted By Skin Piercing**

### **Hepatitis B**

This is spread through the blood system either by penetrating the skin with infected needles, razors etc., or contact with broken skin from contaminated apparatus or surfaces. As many carriers are symptomless, it is essential that piercers employ a high standard of care in their practice at all times. Blood or serum does not have to be visible on the instrument or needle to transmit infection so it is essential therefore that all equipment is properly cleaned and sterilised before use.

It is recommended that if you are a carrier of Hepatitis B that you cease this type of work.

It is recommended that skin piercers obtain a Hepatitis B vaccination from their GP.

### **Hepatitis C**

This is spread through blood-to-blood contact. The same precautions for prevention apply as to Hepatitis B. Hepatitis C is not a new disease; its name has changed from 'Non A and B Hepatitis' to 'Hepatitis C'.

### **HIV (Human Immuno-deficiency Virus)**

This is contracted through the blood or serum from an infected person to someone else. The risk comes, therefore, from accidental inoculation or contamination of a cut or abrasion with the blood of an infected person.

HIV is the virus responsible for causing Aids (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). People with Aids are especially vulnerable to infections by organisms that do not pose a threat to those with normal immunity. Although HIV is easier to control than Hepatitis B, the long term effects are potentially more serious. Therefore, the control systems used for Hepatitis B are appropriate.

## Record-Keeping

It is important for practitioners of skin piercing to keep records of their clients and customers. Scrupulous records will prove valuable if there is any question of an infection linked to the premises. Records should be kept for a minimum of one year.

Information required:

- \* Date of procedure
- \* The name of client, contact address and telephone number.
- \* The procedure carried out.
- \* Any further comments.

## Prevention Of Infection

Cover exposed cuts and abrasions, especially on the hands, with waterproof dressings.

Take care to prevent puncture wounds, cuts and abrasions from used needles, razors or glassware. If such an accident does occur, treat immediately by encouraging bleeding and by liberally washing with soap and water. Then cover the wound with a waterproof dressing and seek medical advice.

Record any puncture wound or contamination of broken skin, mouth or eyes.

Never use needles, equipment, instruments etc., on more than one client unless sterilised between clients.

Gloves should be worn and changed after each client.

## Health & Safety At Work

The skin piercer must comply with the provisions of the Health & Safety At Work Act 1974 which places a duty on the piercer to conduct his or her undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons who may be affected thereby are not exposed to risks to their health or safety. This duty extends to both clients and employees. It is by following recognised standards that this duty can be fulfilled. In connection with safety aspects particular attention is drawn to the following.

- \* All floors, passages and stairs shall be of sound construction and properly maintained and should be kept free from obstruction and from any substance likely to cause persons to slip. A substantial handrail must be provided to every staircase. A two-way lighting system must be provided to every staircase.
- \* Machinery, e.g. autoclaves, should be subjected to regular inspection and preventative maintenance where necessary. All inspections and maintenance should be undertaken by a competent person and evidence of maintenance, such as service records and reports, should be kept.
- \* All electrical installations should be in accordance with the Institute of Electrical Engineers' Regulations for the Electrical Equipment of Buildings. Both the installation and portable appliances should be subjected to regular examination. Care should be taken to keep cables as short as possible and routed in such a way as to prevent a risk of tripping.
- \* Accidents must be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangers Occurrences Regulations 1995. This will involve the reporting of all major

accidents to employees and members of the public, and to the enforcing authority without delay - by telephone if possible, with written confirmation being made within ten days. Other injuries to employees that result in more than three days' absence from work excluding the day of the accident are also notifiable.

- \* Where five or more persons are employed, it is the duty of every employer to prepare and as often as may be appropriate revise a written statement of his or her general policy with respect to the health and safety of employees and the organisation, to detail arrangements for the time being in force for carrying out that policy, and to bring the statement and any revision of it to the notice of all employees.

## **Information & Advice**

The Environmental Health Officer is the authorised officer for the purposes of this code of practice and the relevant bylaws. The appropriate officer can be contacted at:

West Oxfordshire District Council, Public Protection Services, Elmfield, New Yatt Road, Witney, Oxon, OX28 1PB.

Tel: 01993 861000

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