

Ear Piercing - Health & Safety Considerations

Relevant Legislation:

- *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974*
- *The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982*

Note: this sheet should be read in conjunction with the Information Sheet entitled "Skin Piercing" for more detail about the following subjects: infection control; cleaning and disinfecting; personal hygiene; premises; personal protective equipment; immunisation; COSHH (hazardous substances).

What is ear piercing?

Ear piercing is the puncturing of the lobe or flat part of the ear cartilage using an ear piercing system/instrument employing a pre-sterilised single use stud and clasp which actually pierces the ear.

What are the hazards associated with ear piercing?

There are recognised hazards if a procedure is not conducted correctly, including;

- infection of the customer or operator due to faulty technique or dirty equipment
- contra-indications e.g. scar tissue leading to medical complications
- damage to blood vessels, nerves and tissues of the ear resulting in pain &/or scarring

What registration procedures do I need to go through if I want to conduct ear piercing at my premises?

Before ear piercing is carried out at your premises, the premises and the people conducting the piercing should be registered with your Local Authority under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and associated bye-laws.

Anyone conducting ear piercing should be registered with the Local Authority before they begin practising.

It is an offence to conduct piercing without the premises or person being registered.

The reason for the registration procedure is to ensure that piercing takes place only in suitable premises and that only competent people conduct the piercing. There is a charge to register - and this charge covers officer time in processing the application.

Who do I need to register with?

Officers from the health & safety section of the Public Health Directorate register premises for skin piercing. These are also the officers who will conduct health & safety inspections of your premises.

There are separate application forms for the premises and staff. Application forms, details of current charges and a copy of the relevant local by laws are available by contacting the Health and Safety section on 0121 704 6828.

What training should my staff have received before being registered?

All piercers should be competent to perform piercing and be trained to use the relevant ear piercing system.

To prove competency training certificates should be provided with the application form. In addition during the registration process each individual will be asked about various procedures they should be trained in by the officer processing the application, including:

- customer screening
- personal hygiene procedures
- cleaning routines
- provision of after care advice to clients
- reporting procedures for incidents
- what to do in the case of a failed piercing
- basic first aid procedures, primarily in the areas of bleeding, dizziness and fainting

What are the basic structural requirements of my premises for it to be acceptable for ear piercing?

Basically you should ensure that:

- all structural surfaces in the piercing area clean and capable of being cleaned;
- that you have a covered waste receptacle which is washable and leak proof;
- that all furniture and fittings are clean and capable of being cleaned;
- there should be a notice prohibiting smoking in the treatment area and immediately outside treatment area;
- you have an adequate supply of readily available clean hot and cold water

What infection control precautions should be in place?

- all ear piercing practitioners should wear clean, washable clothing
- hands and nails must be washed in soap and water or scrubbed with an approved surgical hand disinfectant prior to any procedures
- all work surface should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily
- the client's skin must always be appropriately cleansed using a skin safe alcohol containing antiseptic solution prior to the ear piercing

- a no touch technique should be used as far as possible, to reduce the risk of infection

What management systems will I be asked about?

As part of the registration process you will be asked about various management systems that you should have in place in order to ensure safe piercing at your premises including the following:

- procedures for cleaning and disinfecting the area of the premises where piercing takes place including disposal of waste;
- procedures followed by your staff when conducting a procedure on a customer in order to prevent cross infection;
- procedures for customers who are under 16;
- record systems you should have including consent forms for individual cards for customers;
- after care information provided to customers;
- procedures should a customer complain about a piercing, including record systems and investigation procedures and what advice would be given
- procedures if operators have any open wounds on exposed part of body

It is strongly recommended that these management procedures be documented.

What facilities should I have at the ear piercing station?

- the ear piercing station must be kept clean at all times. All furniture and fittings associated with the ear piercing station should be covered with a smooth, impervious surface to enable effective cleaning.
- there must be hand washing facilities, with hot and cold, or warm running water in the immediate vicinity.
- there must be adequate clean and suitable storage for all ear piercing material, so as to avoid, as far as possible, the risk of contamination.
- waste bins must be lined with a plastic liner.
- there should be a first aid kit on site, and ear piercing practitioners must be trained in what to do in the event of dizziness and fainting after the ear piercing procedure

What procedures should I have for under 16s?

There is no legally prescribed age limit to ear piercing, however you are advised to have your own policy regarding the minimum age. Anyone under the age of 16 should be accompanied by an adult.

What client records should I have?

All customers should be asked to read and sign a consent form, giving details of their name, address and age. The records should confirm that contra indications have been

checked, and this should also be recorded. Details of what has been performed should also be recorded.

Customers should be given written aftercare advice, and it is recommended that this is also recorded on their record card.

If the customer is under 16 then the parent/guardian must sign the consent form in your presence before the procedure takes place.

I have heard about ear piercing instruments being used to pierce other parts of the body such as the nose - is this ok?

No. Ear piercing instrumentation is specifically designed for piercing the outer perimeter and lobe of the ear and under no circumstances should it be used to pierce any other part of the body.

What would happen if a complaint was made to the local authority about a piercing received at my premises?

Basically you would be contacted by a health & safety inspector, who would investigate the complaint. This visit may involve a physical inspection of your premises, which may be unannounced, depending upon the nature of the complaint.

It will be up to you to demonstrate proactive health & safety management, and this is one of the reasons why you should keep client record cards, and also document your safe systems of work, and maintain staff training records. Without documentation, it is difficult to substantiate what training, and procedures were followed.

For example if a client complained that they had contracted an infection at your premises whilst being pierced, the inspector would conduct a physical inspection of relevant parts of your business e.g. the treatment area and question your infection control procedures. Staff training would be examined, as would client record cards, and the checks for contra indications and aftercare advice that was offered following the procedure.

Once registered can I expect further visits from health & safety inspectors?

Yes - however the frequency of visits will depend on a number of factors. If following your initial visit the inspector thought that your management procedures were well established then future inspections to conduct health & safety inspections will be less frequent than if the inspector had concerns and believed there was room for improvement.

Also you could receive a visit if a complaint about your premises or a procedure received there is made.

What should I do with my registration certificate?

It should be conspicuously exhibited at all times, and in such a way that it is clearly visible to all persons visiting the premises.

Helpful Information

- Skin Piercing Information Sheet - provides more detailed information relating to the general topic of skin piercing

Contact

For more information please contact Health & Safety on 0121 704 6828 or via email at safety@solihull.gov.uk