

Health and Safety Considerations for Tattooists

Relevant Legislation:

The 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 the following subjects: infection control; cleaning and disinfecting; personal hygiene; premises; personal protective equipment; immunisation; COSHH (hazardous substances).

What is tattooing?

It is marking the skin with permanent pigments by puncturing the skin's outer layer using needles.

Are there any age restrictions regarding tattooing?

A person must be 18 years of age before they can have a tattoo. This is a statutory requirement, with criminal penalties on conviction by magistrates.

What records should be kept by a tattooist ?

The keeping of records protects both the client and the tattooist and therefore the following details should be included in client records:

- Date of the procedure;
- Client's name, address and telephone number;
- Full details of the procedure;
- A record of the type of the procedure;
- Medical history. A basic health declaration form can be presented in tick box format and include history of:
 - heart disease;
 - medication;
 - pregnancy/breast feeding;
 - blood borne viruses such as HIV, Hepatitis B and C;
 - low blood pressure (can make people prone to fainting);
 - epilepsy;
 - diabetes;
 - impetigo;
 - skin conditions such as eczema, warts and psoriasis.
- Whether there is a history of relevant medical conditions (see this list of contra-indications below).

What contra-indications should be considered by a tattooist before performing a procedure?

The tattooist should discuss client's medical history and ask whether they have experienced or suffered from the following:

- Acne;
- Allergic responses to latex, anaesthetics and adhesive plasters;
- Conditions that compromise the immune system;
- Heart disease/pacemaker;
- Impetigo;
- Seizures e.g. epilepsy;
- High blood pressure;
- Haemophilia.

Where any of the above conditions exist, or there be past history, written authorisation from the client's doctor should be required before tattooing takes place. The tattooist should record the clients' response to the above on the client's record card and consent form.

What equipment should a tattooist have to conduct hygienic tattooing?

- alcohol impregnated swabs (pre packed) for skin preparation;
- autoclave;
- disinfectants;
- disposable caps or trays for pigments;
- disposable latex, vinyl or nitrile gloves may be worn, but must be discarded after each client (they must be disposed of as clinical waste);
- disposable razor;
- kidney dish (autoclavable container for needles);
- paper tissues and paper towels;
- sharps container;
- spray bottle containing fresh skin preparation antiseptic.

After performing a tattoo the operator should give after care advice:

It is best practice to give out written after care advice as clients are often nervous or excited about their new tattoo and may not take in verbal advice. Basically the treated area must be covered with a lint free sterile gauze which is taped to the skin with micropore tape - this permits ventilation of the damaged skin surface, helping the healing process.

The new tattoo should be kept dry to prevent the onset of infection.

Other things that should be considered by the business operator:

- it should be ensured that neither the practitioner nor the client should be under the adverse influence of drugs, alcohol or other substances;
- tattooing should be undertaken in conditions of appropriate privacy;
- eating, drinking and smoking should not be permitted in the studio;
- tattoo machines (motors and frames) cannot be sterilised and should be carefully damp wiped between clients with 70% alcohol;
- because tattooing needles are repeatedly dipped into pigments during tattooing, it is very important that fresh pigments are used for each customer;
- pigment capsules should be firmly placed in holders while in use, to avoid the possibility of spillage. These should be made of autoclavable material e.g. stainless steel and should be cleaned and disinfected between clients and sterilised between sessions.

I want a tattoo - what checks can I do to decide whether or not to choose a particular operator?

There are some basic indicators to help you assess whether a premises is operating according to good practice including:

- tattooists should be registered to operate with the local authority and should display their registration certificate. If there is no certificate on display, it may mean that the premises is not known by the local authority, and therefore hasn't received necessary checks. You can check this by contacting the local authority;
- if the operator intends to perform your tattoo without asking for your medical history or personal details such as name and address, this indicates bad practice;
- ask what after care advice will be given following the procedure best practice is to offer written advice to customers.

Helpful Information:

- Skin Piercing Information Sheet

Contact

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