

## **Skin Piercing**

If you own a premises where skin piercing is undertaken there are many health and safety issues that you should consider and manage to safeguard the health and safety of both your staff and customers.

This Premises Information Sheet is intended to give you guidance on the main issues and how to tackle them (this is not an exhaustive list of issues, nor are they listed in particular order of importance).

### **What is Skin Piercing?**

This includes activities like tattooing, electrolysis, ear piercing, and body piercing.

Some general health and safety management points to consider are:

- if you employ 5 employees or more then you should have a written health and safety policy. (Refer to Safety Policy Information Sheet) The arrangements section of your policy should contain reference to the issues raised in this Information Sheet, together with details on how you are to manage them at your salon.
- you should ensure that your staff are trained in health and safety and it is strongly recommended that records are maintained.
- you should have an accident book, in which both staff and customer accidents should be recorded. You should also have adequate provision for first aid for your employees. (Refer to First Aid at Work Information Sheet).
- you should be familiar with the types of accident/ill health that should be reported and the reporting procedure to follow. (See Workplace Accidents Information Sheet)
- escape routes should be kept clear of stock and obstructions
- an Information for Employees poster should be displayed in your salon for staff (refer to Health and Safety Law Poster information sheet).
- you should avoid using LPG heaters if at all possible, however if you do need to use them it is essential that you keep the salon well ventilated due to the emission of carbon dioxide, and that access to the heater is controlled
- if you employ any contractors you should ensure they are competent to do the job and that they work safely, for example window cleaners, decorators and electricians. You do have some health and safety responsibilities for their activities whilst on your premises. (Refer to Contractors Information Sheet).

### **Registration with your Local Authority**

Premises and people carrying out electrolysis, ear piercing, tattooing and acupuncture need to be separately registered with their Local Authority under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, any associated bye-laws. Registration forms are available from this Department.

## **Training**

- you are required to ensure that your staff are adequately trained to ensure they conduct their work safely. In the event of a complaint against your business you will be asked to prove that anyone who has conducted a procedure is competent to do so.
- it is recommended that anyone who conducts body piercing has also undertaken some first aid training
- your should ensure that your staff are informed and trained thoroughly in your procedures

## **Recording Client Details**

- the keeping of records protects both the client and the piercer and therefore you are advised to maintain thorough records.
- for the client the keeping of technical details of their treatment will allow any follow up care to be tailored in the knowledge of all the relevant details.
- for the piercer the identification of any allergies or health problems that may affect the treatment is essential to avoid complications during or after the procedure. Declaration of age is a fundamental part of the process
- a list of what should be included in your client details documentation can be found at the end of this information sheet

## **Infection Control**

- the consequences of a unsafe treatment are severe and therefore proactive management procedures are required to prevent infection.
- as there is a risk of blood borne virus transmission during body piercing, it is essential to have measures in place to control infection and these procedures should be documented. (See the Information sheet on Bloodborne Viruses)
- you should use single use instruments when ever possible and where this is not possible, reusable instruments must be reprocessed properly
- you should have procedures in place should a member of your staff think they have been exposed to a client's blood as a result of a sharps injury. This procedure should involve prompt medical attention.

## **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- thorough cleaning is a prerequisite to all other decontamination processes: if an item is not clean then disinfection/sterilisation is more difficult. You should have written procedures for the cleaning of equipment
- used instruments should be cleaned thoroughly to remove all debris and body fluids, first in cool water and then in warm water. Your staff should understand that scrubbing can create aerosols which can spread infectious agents from contaminated equipment and therefor this practice should not taken place.

- Ultrasonic cleaning can be more consistent than manual cleaning and reduces aerosols. If you do not already use an ultrasonic cleaner, this should be seriously considered.
- your sterilisation procedures should also be documented: steam is the preferred method as it is rapid and effective. Autoclaves should be regularly maintained to ensure they are operating correctly: you should keep records of these checks.

## **Immunisation**

- hepatitis B is highly infectious and is more resistant to disinfection than HIV, so immunisation against Hepatitis B for your staff not only protects your employees but also clients, and is therefore highly recommended. You should have a policy regarding this issue.
- it is strongly advised that you obtain proof from staff that they have been immunised.
- Hepatitis B immunisation can be obtained from employee's GPs, as are tetanus immunisations, which are also recommended.
- it must be appreciated that immunisation is not a replacement for good hygiene standards in the piercing studio: there is no vaccine available against HIV or hepatitis C so any potential contact with other body fluids should be approached with the necessary precautions.

## **Personal Hygiene**

- a good standard of piercer's personal hygiene is essential
- conveniently accessible hand washing facilities must be provided and have:
  - hot and cold running water in a purpose designed basin with effective drainage
  - preferably lever operated mixer taps
  - liquid soap with an antiseptic action
  - disposable towels
- staff training should include the importance of hand washing, especially after visiting the WC, handling food and drinks, removing protective gloves, before and after tattooing or skin piercing and when ever hands become accidentally contaminated with blood/body fluids or secretions

## **Premises**

- you should ensure that there is sufficient space in your business to facilitate safe easy movement and performance of procedures
- you should ensure physical separation of clean operating areas from general circulation, storage and administration areas
- ensure good lighting and ventilation
- provide sufficient work surfaces for equipment
- your bench surfaces and the floor should be impervious to water and easy to clean
- provide a sink with hot and cold running water
- there should be no smoking, eating or drinking facilities in treatment areas
- provide foot operated waste bins

## **Personal Protective Clothing**

- it is recommended that surgical style gloves be used to protect the piercer during contact with bodily fluids and tissues
- disposable latex or vinyl gloves should be worn during piercing and must be disposed of between clients: this protects both the client and the piercer
- domestic style gloves are only appropriate for cleaning of equipment
- clean washable clothes are suitable for piercer but if heavy soiling is anticipated then a disposable plastic apron should be worn and disposed of between clients
- reusable cotton towels should not be used as clothing protection as they may harbour and transmit infection.

## **Aftercare Advice**

- your staff should be trained to give comprehensive aftercare advice and it is strongly recommended that this be documented and not verbal advice
- advice to clients should be offered and reinforced throughout the procedure
- basic aftercare information should include instructions to minimise healing times and reduce the risk of acquiring infection (i.e. good standards of personal hygiene, avoidance of direct handling of the pierced site for at least 4 days, keeping the pierced site dry for at least 4 days)
- an indication of general healing times should be given depending upon the part of the body pierced

## **Hazardous Substances**

- you are required by the COSHH Regulations to assess the exposure to substances used in your premises that could be potentially dangerous to staff and customers. The main purpose of this is to make sure people are working in the safest possible conditions.
- micro organisms are covered by these Regulations, such as those encountered in blood and other body fluids
- for your skin piercing staff there is a real risk of contact with blood borne biological agents including HIV and hepatitis viruses. These are classified as "biological agents that can cause severe human disease and present a serious hazard to employees".
- the primary objective of these Regulations is to where ever possible avoid using hazardous substances and if this is not possible, to have safe systems of work and procedures to safeguard anyone using them or exposed to them.
- you should have basic rules for the safe handling of substances and your staff should be trained in these including the use of personal protective equipment, clearing up of spillage's and using products at the correct concentrations.

(Refer to the Hazardous Substances Information Sheet).

## **Waste Storage and Disposal Procedures**

- waste produced from piercing activities is clinical waste and therefore it should be carefully and correctly stored and disposed of
- sharps boxes should be available for the safe storage of needles
- other clinical waste should be stored in yellow bags in a designated area awaiting disposal

## **Electrical Safety**

- you are required to ensure that your electrical system (and this includes portable appliances such as autoclaves and kettles) is safe and well maintained and one way of achieving this is to have your appliances checked on a regular basis by a competent person.
- you are advised to keep a list of all appliances at your premises. Any new equipment should be added to the list. This can then be used as a register by your competent person when they conduct the checks. Records should be kept of these checks.
- you are advised to have a policy about personal electrical equipment that may be brought onto site by your staff, for example radios, toasters and heaters. Either you should not allow them, or ensure that they are checked by a competent person before they are used at your premises.

## **Risk Assessment**

- risk assessments should be conducted of your own work environment and activities. The findings of your assessment will differ from other piercing premises as structures will be different, equipment will differ, as will staff capability and client base. For example in your salon there may be structural aspects that are not present in other buildings e.g. steps that need highlighting. (Refer to the Risk Assessment - General information sheet)
- if you employ anyone under 18 in your premises, because of their age, the law regards under 18's to be inexperienced in the workplace and therefore requires employers to conduct a risk assessment that considers the work they are involved in and whether any additional control measures, if any are required to protect them whilst they are at work. (Refer to the Risk Assessment - Young People Information Sheet). For example you may decide to exclude them from any part of the piercing process unless trained.
- if you employ female staff then you should also conduct a pregnant worker/nursing mothers risk assessment that considers the risks to staff whilst pregnant and at work. The findings of this assessment should be brought to the attention of your staff who are of child bearing age. (Refer to Risk Assessment - New and Expectant Mothers Information Sheet)

## **Welfare Requirements**

- you must ensure that correct welfare provisions are provided at your premises, including ventilated sanitary accommodation with a wash hand basin supplied with hot and cold or warm water.
- as your staff work with the public, they should have somewhere private to go for a break which has seating and facilities for them to eat/drink which is completely segregated from any treatment areas. (Refer to Workplace Welfare Requirements Information Sheet)

## **Cash handling and Staff Safety**

- you should always be aware of the potential for violence to you and your staff as cash is handled on your premises. You need safe systems of work for banking, and procedures for opening and closing the premises: ideally this should not be conducted by one member of staff only.
- the way your salon is internally arranged is also important, For example the position of the cash register can either encourage or deter opportunistic theft.

## **Recommended details to be included in client records:**

- date of procedure
- clients name, address and telephone number
- full details of the procedure
- a record of the type of body jewellery used, if applicable. (Please note if you did not supply the jewellery then details of the supplier should be ascertained from the client and recorded)
- 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 C
  - low blood pressure (can make people prone to fainting)
  - epilepsy
  - diabetes
  - impetigo
  - skin conditions such as eczema, warts and psoriasis
- is there a history of relevant medical conditions the client should be advised of to see their GP for advice on suitability for piercing?
- Some indication as to whether the client is under the influence of alcohol/drugs. If so advise client not to undergo treatment

Should you ever receive a visit from an Officer of this Department to investigate an accident/incident or complaint at your premises, or to conduct a routine inspection, it is advantageous to you to produce copies of client information, staff training records, and

documented safe systems of work which help to prove you proactively manage health and safety.

**Helpful Information:**

- Body art, cosmetic therapies and other special therapies, produced by the CIEH  
ISBN 1902423801 £20

**Contact**

For more information please contact Health & Safety on 0121 704 6828 or via email at [safety@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:safety@solihull.gov.uk)