

Electrolysis - 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 electrolysis?

There are two basic categories of hair removal - temporary hair removal (or depilation) is the removal of hair from the skin's surface e.g. tweezing & waxing and epilation refers to electrolysis techniques which are known to have permanent effects.

Electrolysis involves a fine needle being inserted into each hair follicle (not the skin), to discharge minute amounts of electrical current, with the aim of eliminating the blood supply to the base of the follicle, preventing new hair from growing. It may take repeated attempts, as hair grows in cycles and does not appear on the surface at the same time.

What are the hazards associated with electrolysis?

If the electrolysis procedure is not conducted correctly, the hazards include:

- burning
- infection i.e. folliculitis (which is swelling/inflammation)
- pain
- scarring

What registration procedures do I need to go through, if any, if I want to conduct electrolysis at my premises?

Before electrolysis is conducted at your premises, the premises and people conducting the electrolysis should be registered with your Local Authority under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and associated by-laws.

Anyone conducting electrolysis should be registered with the Local Authority **before** they begin practising.

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

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

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.

Who can conduct electrolysis?

All people who conduct beauty therapy and hair removal treatments must have completed a recognised course and have documentary evidence of this training. This objective proof will be required before a person is registered.

What infection control measures should be in place?

- all operators should wear clean, washable clothing
- all hard surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected before and after each client
- thorough hand washing should take place before a treatment is performed
- single use sterile needles are recommended. One needle may be used repeatedly on an individual session and then discarded to a sharps box. A new single use needle should be used for each client.
- any reusable equipment must be effectively sterilised, and documented sterilisation procedures maintained.
- sterilisation equipment should be maintained on a regular basis to ensure effective sterilisation, and also their safety as a pressure system.

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

Basically you should ensure that:

- the treatment area is used solely for the purpose of giving treatments, and must be completely separated from all other rooms, by full height walls and partitions.
- suitable screening should be provided to maintain privacy
- all structural surfaces in the treatment 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
- there should be a first aid kit on site, and practitioners must be trained in what to do in the event of dizziness and fainting during or after a treatment

What client records should I have?

- client records should be maintained for each customer including their name & address and medical history.
- any contra indications e.g. heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy etc. for each treatment must be discussed with the client prior to a treatment and recorded.
- where necessary you should advise clients to obtain medical referral before administering a procedure & copies of relevant GP's correspondence should be attached to a client's records.
- a complete description of all electrolysis and beauty procedures performed should be maintained
- anyone under 16 years of age must be accompanied by a parent/guardian who must sign a consent form.
- clients should be given written information to take away about contra-indications and risks of treatment, together with aftercare advice. This should be noted on their record card, which should be signed and dated.

What safety precautions will inspectors look for?

- pre-packed, single use sterilised needles of the correct type and diameter should be used at each treatment and afterwards disposed of in a sharps box.
- single use gloves should be worn when epilating
- knowledge of the chosen machine and technical skill are necessary, so all staff involved should have received training in the equipment used.

What would happen if a complaint was made to the local authority about a treatment 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, 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.

It is also likely that they would examine your equipment's maintenance records, e.g. for autoclaves.

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.

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 procedures received there is made.

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