

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR SKIN PIERCING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Code of Practice will apply whenever the operation of a business involves the practice of puncturing or piercing the skin or flesh of the human body. Such activities would include acupuncture, ear piercing and tattooing.

1.2 The standards and procedures outlined will be regarded as necessary to fulfil the statutory duties of employers, employees or self employed persons as outlined in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974.

2.0 CONSTRUCTIONAL STANDARDS

2.1 The floors, walls, screen partitions and ceilings of premises should be of sound construction, smooth finish and capable of being readily cleaned and redecorated where appropriate. Finishes should be light reflective colours.

2.2 Effective and suitable means of ventilation should be provided.

2.3 Effective provision should be made for lighting the premises. The Illuminating Engineering Society Code recommended level for the operational area is 500 LUX.

3.0 CLEANLINESS OF PREMISES AND FIXTURES

3.1 The floor and floor covering, internal walls, screen partitions and ceiling shall be maintained in a clean condition.

3.2 A suitable receptacle with close fitting lid shall be provided for waste material.

3.3 Every chair, seat or couch shall be maintained in a clean condition.

3.4 Every shelf, table, cabinet, wash-hand basin and other fittings shall be maintained in a clean condition.

#### **4.0 CLEANLINESS OF INSTRUMENTS, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT**

4.1 All gowns, wraps or other protective clothing shall be in a clean condition before use with any customer.

4.2 Paper or other material used as a covering on a chair or seat or couch and any towel, cloth or any article which is applied to the customers skin shall be clean and shall not previously have been used in connection with any other customer unless it consists of a material which can be and has been adequately cleaned.

4.3 All instruments shall be clean and needles must be sterile before use with any customer (see Appendix I).

4.4 A fresh supply of dye-stuff from a clean receptacle shall be used for each customer of a tattoo business.

#### **5.0 PERSONAL CLEANLINESS OF OPERATOR**

5.1 Every person who attends a customer must have clean hands and wear a clean washable overall.

5.2 Any boil, sore or scratch on an exposed part of the body must be effectively covered by an impermeable dressing.

#### **6.0 WASHING FACILITIES**

6.1 A wash-hand basin with an adequate supply of running hot and cold water should be provided at a position conveniently accessible to the operating area. Soap, nailbrush and disposable towels must be provided and maintained at the wash-hand basin.

#### **7.0 FIRST AID**

7.1 A first aid box should be provided and maintained containing suitable and sufficient bandages, dressings (including waterproof dressings) and antiseptic.

#### **8.0 INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

8.1 Adequate enquiries must be made to ensure that customers are not suffering from any infectious disease before the operation commences.

**9.0**      **PREVENTION OF INFECTION**

9.1      The area of skin to be treated should be carefully cleansed. The use of a proprietary medical wipe is recommended.

**10.0**     **RECORDS**

10.1     Adequate records should be maintained of all customers and details of their treatment.

**11.0**     **REMOVAL OF TATTOOS**

11.1     The removal of tattoos is an operation which is likely to give rise to complications. Persons requiring the removal of a tattoo should be advised to consult their medical practitioner.

**12.0**     **GENERAL**

12.1     There should be no smoking in the operational area and a notice should be displayed.

12.2     In premises where tattooing is carried out a notice should be displayed with details of the TATTOOING OF MINORS ACT, 1969.

**13.0**     **EAR PIERCING**

13.1     Problems have arisen from not only unhygienic practices during this operation, but from the adverse effects of unsuitable materials remaining in close contact with body fluids. It is most important that "sleepers" are made of suitable materials, for example gold, platinum and surgical stainless steel.

13.2     The use of modern "gun" injectors utilising sterile fitments and no manual handling of those fitments is to be recommended as a simple, virtually foolproof, practical method of ear piercing.

13.3     Customers should be advised to contact their medical adviser in case of complications arising following the operation.

**14.0**     **FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

14.1     The Leicestershire County Council Fire Service Department are responsible for advising on fire precaution matters, and will inspect premises from time to time. Should any occupier require advice

on fire alarms, fire fighting appliances, means of escape in the case of fire or any other relevant matter, they should contact the Fire Prevention Officer at Wigston Fire Station, Telephone 872241.

14.2 Any other enquiries should be addressed to the Head of Environmental Health, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, Council Offices, Station Road, Wigston, Leicestershire. LE18 2DR. (Telephone 888961).

STERILISATION OF INSTRUMENTS

1. There are a few satisfactory methods of ensuring sterility of instruments. Practical methods are:-

(a) Purchase of disposable needles which have been irradiated after manufacture and packaging.

(b) Chemical sterilisation which requires some care in the preparation of fluids.

(c) Steam or heat sterilisation.

2. Any of the above methods are satisfactory.

Method (a) involves little effort on the part of the operator other than ensuring no contamination of the instrument after removal from sterile wrapping.

Method (b) involves the operator in careful preparation of fluids, care in ensuring that instruments are exposed to the fluids for the necessary period and care in the handling of fluids to prevent injury.

Method (c) involves the purchase of an autoclave or hot air sterilising cabinet. The simplest form of autoclave is the domestic pressure cooker which may be purchased very cheaply. If a larger or more elaborate device is needed medical autoclaves or hot air sterilising cabinets are available for relatively modest sums. The use of heat sterilising equipment is simple and straightforward.

A MODEL METHOD FOR HYGIENIC TATTOOING

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EQUIPMENT

Recommended Equipment for Hygiene

Autoclave  
Ultrasonic cleaner  
Autoclavable metal syringe  
Disposable razor or metal safety razor with disposal blades  
Disposable capsules for pigment  
Paper tissues, towels and cups  
"Sharps-disposal" cardboard box  
Autoclavable containers for needles e.g. kidney-dish  
Metal forceps  
Alcohol-impregnated swabs (pre-packed)  
Disinfectants - see below, Section G

PREPARATION AND TATTOOING OPERATION

A. SHAVING AND CLEANING OF SKIN

The skin to be tattooed should be wiped over with a "Medi-swab" or similar alcohol impregnated swab. Disposable razor, one per client, is ideal. If metal razor, safety type is recommended; use on one client only, then throw away blade, then autoclave. A "cut-throat" type razor may nick the skin, is difficult to disinfectant and therefore is not advisable. Tattooists who have any broken skin must keep the area covered with a waterproof plaster while operating.

B. VASELINE (PETROLEUM JELLY B.P.)

Most tattooists smear the area to be tattooed with vaseline. If taken from a jar with fingers, contamination is likely. An autoclaved metal syringe - e.g. ear syringe as used by doctors - should be filled with vaseline using a disposable or autoclaved metal spatula, and the amount required squirted out and smeared over the area with a dry disposable wooden spatula used once only, or autoclaved metal spatula.

C. PREPARATION OF TATTOO EQUIPMENT

1. Resterilisable stainless steel needles are recommended. They must be ultrasonically cleaned and autoclaved (see Nos. 3 and 4 below) between clients. Chromium-plated needles should be used once only and then discarded.
2. As many needles as are needed for one day should be estimated, and then soldered on with a lead-free solder to the stainless steel rods in advance of a day's work.
3. The needle bars and needles should be placed in a paper cup and treated ultrasonically to remove flux residue, dust and any organic matter. The paper cup should contain spirit or hot water and detergent, and be disposed of after one use.
4. Needles and needle bars should then be sterilised in an autoclave by saturated steam at 134°C for 3 minutes.
5. Needles must not be tested on the tattooist's skin before use on a client.
6. The "tubes" - i.e. the holders for the stainless steel needle bars - must also be sterilised in the autoclave, together with forceps, metal syringes, and other instruments.

7. The "motors" or frames cannot be sterilised and they should be damp-wiped daily with spirit, or with freshly-made up 1.5% solution of clear soluble phenolic (e.g. Hycolin), or with activated aqueous glutaraldehyde (e.g. Cidex).
8. After being sterilised, the needles and bars may be left in the autoclave until use. Some may be fixed to tubes and motors in readiness, but the needle ends must then be stored in tubes containing activated glutaraldehyde.
9. Sterile forceps should be used for handling sterile needles and bars. These should be re-sterilised in the autoclave with each new batch of needles.

D. USE OF PIGMENT

Because needles are repeatedly dipped into pigments during tattooing, it is most important that fresh pigments in sterile containers are used for each customer.

1. Put as much of each pigment as is likely to be needed for one customer into capsules.
2. Disposable capsules for dyes should be used, one set for each customer. Non-disposable containers are not recommended.
3. Pigment capsules should be firmly placed in holders while in use, to avoid the possibility of spillage. These holders should be made of autoclave material i.e. aluminium or stainless steel. They should be cleaned with spirit or activated glutaraldehyde between clients and autoclaved between sessions.
4. Only as many pigment capsules as are needed for each client should be racked in holders, otherwise splashing may occur into an empty container.



## AFTER CARE

### E. CLEANING AND DISPOSAL OF EQUIPMENT

#### 1. Needles

After each customer is tattooed, the needle bars must be disengaged, with the tubes, from the machine and placed in an autoclavable dish e.g. stainless steel kidney dish. At the end of the session, the needle is "burned off" by flaming from the point to the soldered junctions, and unless resterilisable needles are used, the needles are thrown away. Reusable needles must be used once only before being autoclaved. The needle bars must be cleaned ultrasonically, as before, then resterilised in the autoclave. Ultrasonic treatment alone is not effective. All used needles should be disinfected before discarding, either by flaming, autoclaving or boiling; as an alternative they may be placed in a fresh solution of hypochlorite (i.e. "chloros" or domestic bleach at 5000 parts per million or diluted 1 part in 5 with water) before disposal (see below).

#### 2. Pigment Capsules

The pigment capsules must be disposed after each customer.

#### 3. Capsule Holders and Forceps

Must be autoclaved between sessions.

### F. CARE OF SKIN AFTER TATTOOING

The tattooed area must be covered with sterile gauze which is then sellotaped to the skin; gauze permits ventilation.

## DISINFECTANTS

G. Disinfectants do not sterilise; they only reduce the number of some microbes. Nevertheless, the intelligent use of disinfectant can be of value. Hypochlorite solutions (e.g. chloros, Domestos) of the correct strength or aldehyde disinfectants (e.g. "Cidex" (glutaraldehyde) used undiluted after addition of the powder activator) are likely to be most useful to tattooists. Hypochlorites

at the effective strength (see E.1) above, may corrode metals. Spirit (70% alcohol) or a clear phenolic (e.g. 1.5% hycolin) are suitable for wiping motors and table tops. Solutions of hypochlorite and clear phenolics must be freshly made up each day, and of glutaraldehyde each week, and manufacturers' instructions regarding the correct concentrations strictly followed.

The following table summarises the use of disinfectants in the hygienic tattooist's procedures:-

	<u>Agent</u>	<u>Preparation</u>	<u>Uses</u>
1.	Hypochlorite (chlorox, Domestos)	Make up daily, dilute to 5000 parts per million	Corrodes metals. Excellent for other materials, and for disinfection of needle etc. before disposal
2.	Glutaraldehyde (Gidex)	Make up weekly, using activator. Do not dilute	Damp wiping motors and pigment- capsule motors. Ends of autoclaved needles attached to motors may be suspended in this in readiness for customer
3.	70% spirit/ alcohol	Do not dilute	Skin, table tops, metals (except needle holders and tubes)
4.	Clear phenolics (Hycolin)	Make up daily, dilute according to manufacturer's instructions	Table tops, damp-wiping motors

It can be seen that the use of 1 and 2 will suffice for most purposes. The use of disinfectants other than those mentioned above is a waste of money and may lead to a false sense of security.

#### DISPOSAL

H. All waste matter - needles, capsules, paper towels and tissue should be collected in a sealable leak proof plastic bag or box and incinerated or autoclaved before disposal. Particular care must be taken in the disposal of needles; a stout cardboard

"Sharps-disposal" box for needles, such as is used in hospitals, is recommended. Disinfectants may be poured carefully down the sink after use, and flushed with running water.

All other items used for one customer e.g. paper tissues, paper cups etc., must be disposed of by incineration or into a waste bin lined with a plastic bag which can be sealed and incinerated.

NOTE

The British Tattoo Artists Federation will advise on any problems associated with this document, including the availability of any equipment mentioned here.

Their registered office is at: 301 King Street,  
Fenton,  
Stoke-on-Trent,  
STAFFORDSHIRE.

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