

Cosmetic Piercing Guidelines

Under the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, employers of piercers should ensure their staff have received suitable and sufficient training to carry out their work safely.

It is recommended that all new piercers should have at least **one** year of supervised training as an apprentice to become a competent piercer.

Age of consent

The piercing of nipples and genitalia of children under the age of 16 can be regarded as indecent assault under sexual offences legislation, and could lead to the piercer being prosecuted.

The maturity of those aged between 16 and 18 should be considered when deciding whether to carry out a piercing on a person that age.

Photographic identification should be checked as proof of age.

Babies and young children

Babies and young children can suffer unnecessarily from infections as a result of ear piercing. This is because they are unable to care properly for the piercing and infections are almost certain to arise when handling the studs.

Children's ears should not be pierced, under any circumstances, without parental consent.

If a parent wishes to have their child's ears pierced, they should be made fully aware of the danger of infection. You should also ask them to sign a consent form.

All parental consent forms should be kept for at least **three** years.

Client health

You should have a consultation with clients before you provide any treatment.

It should include questions to check that a client is not suffering from any of the following medical conditions;

- Heart disease
- Eczema or psoriasis
- Diabetes
- Impetigo
- Genital warts (if relevant to a piercing)
- Epilepsy

- Haemophilia or haemorrhaging
- High or low blood pressure
- HIV infection
- Hepatitis B or C
- Is pregnant or a nursing mother
- Allergies
- Cellulitis
- Keloid scarring.

You should make a record of this during your consultation.

You should advise anyone with any of the above conditions to consult their doctor for advice before having a treatment.

Recent advice from the British Society from Antimicrobial Chemotherapy advises that anyone who has had heart surgery, or who has been diagnosed with a heart condition, should consult their doctor before having a nose, lip, tongue or genital piercing due to the risk of developing a serious infection.

Consent of client and record keeping

Piercers should get consent from their clients before giving a piercing.

The following information should be obtained from each client;

- Name and address
- Age
- Proof of age provided (photographic identification, for example, driving licence or passport)
- Date and nature of piercing
- Type of body jewellery used
- Parental consent (if necessary).

Consent forms should be kept for at least **three** years.

Pre-treatment warnings

Piercers should warn their clients of the possible risks involved in having a piercing.

These risks include;

- Scarring
- Blood poisoning (septicaemia)
- Jewellery embedding or migration
- Allergic reactions, for example, allergies to jewellery or antiseptics
- Localised infection
- Localised swelling and trauma around the pierced area.

Hygiene of premises and treatment areas

All internal floors, walls, doors, windows and ceilings should be kept clean and in good repair.

All table tops, shelves and other work surfaces should be designed so that they are

smooth, solid and can be effectively cleaned between clients. This also applies to couches and seats.

All tables and couches used should be covered with a disposable paper sheet which should be changed for each client.

A wash hand basin with a supply of hot and cold running water should be provided in the treatment room for tattooists to wash their hands prior to, and between, piercings.

Liquid sanitising soap, paper towels, a nail brush and a bin should also be provided.

Suitable lighting and ventilation should be available and maintained in the premises. Any sanitary accommodation provided should be maintained and kept clean.

Hygiene of equipment

All instruments and needles used in the piercing process should be sterile for each customer.

Single-use pre-sterilised equipment should be used where possible.

Please be aware that disinfectants do not sterilise.

Pre-packed sterile needles and jewellery can be purchased from a reputable supplier. Re-usable instruments, jewellery and needles can be sterilised by using steam or heat sterilisation methods.

You should follow the manufacturer's instructions for operating and maintaining your sterilisation equipment carefully.

Standard bench-top sterilisers should only be used to sterilise non-hollow and unpackaged items. Vacuum sterilisers should be used to sterilise hollow and packaged items.

Sterile items should be stored in a dry, sterile, airtight container if they are not in pouches. Unpackaged sterile items should be used within **three** hours of removal from the steam steriliser.

The performance of sterilising equipment should be checked regularly to ensure sterilising conditions are being met. These checks should be carried out by a competent person, in keeping with the manufacturer's instructions.

The pressure systems of bench-top sterilisers must be checked in compliance with the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Further advice on sterilisation equipment and processes is available from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

You can visit their website at www.mhra.gov.uk or call 020 7084 2000.

Hygiene of the operator

Clean, washable or disposable clothing should be worn by piercers at all times during the preparation and treatment.

All cuts, wounds, boils and sores should be covered by a waterproof dressing.

Hands should be washed regularly, especially before and after treating each client. Nails should be kept short and clean.

Single-use sterile gloves should be put on at the beginning of each tattooing procedure and a new pair used for each client.

Eating, drinking and smoking should not be allowed in the treatment or preparation areas and signs prohibiting eating, drinking and smoking should be displayed in these areas.

Immunisation

Anyone carrying out cosmetic piercing should be vaccinated against the Hepatitis B virus for their own safety, and the safety of the client.

Jewellery

All jewellery used must comply with the Dangerous Substances and Preparations (Nickel) (Safety) Regulations 2005.

Only solid 14 carat (ct) or 18ct gold, niobium, titanium or platinum jewellery should be used for piercings.

Silver is not suitable for body piercing because it damages easily and may increase the risk of infection.

Aftercare advice

- Piercers should provide their clients with written information on how to care for their piercing and what form normal healing should take.

It should include the following advice;

- Do not touch the piercing for at least 96 hours (four days) after treatment
- Keep the piercing dry
- Wash hands thoroughly before touching the piercing or jewellery
- Turn the jewellery once or twice a day
- Do not cover the piercing with a tight-fitting dressing
- What to expect in normal healing, for example, some tenderness, slight redness, itching and slight swelling
- Consult a GP if redness or swelling spreads or if pain continues
- Details of any special care that needs to be taken with certain piercings.

Waste disposal

Waste from cosmetic piercing is clinical waste and must be treated as such.

All waste materials and other litter from the treatment should be placed in suitable covered bins, which are leak proof or have a leak proof liner bag. These bins should

be emptied, or the liners changed, at least **once** every working day.

A sharps box must be provided for needles, razors and other sharp objects to make sure used sharps are stored safely.

All clinical waste and sharps must be collected by a registered carrier who can dispose of it safely.

A list of registered carriers is available from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency website at www.ni-environment.gov.uk

You can also call them on 028 9056 9389.

First aid

A first aid kit should be kept in the treatment area.

Piercers should hold at least a basic first aid qualification but preferably be qualified first aiders.

Details of HSENI-approved First Aid at Work courses and first aid-approved training organisations are available from the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland website at www.hseni.gov.uk

You can also call them on 028 9024 3249.

Useful Contacts

Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI)
83 Ladas Drive
Belfast
BT6 9FR
Tel: 028 9024 3249
Email: hseni@detini.gov.uk
Website: www.hseni.gov.uk

British Body Piercing Association
Dalton House
60 Windsor Road
London
SW19 2RR
Email: info@bbpa.org.uk
Website: www.bbpa.org.uk

Hairdressing and Beauty Industry Authority (HABIA)
Oxford House
Sixth Avenue
Sky Business Park
Robin Hood Airport
Doncaster
DN9 3GG

Tel: 0845 2306 080
Email: info@habia.org
Website: www.habia.org.uk

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
Room 432
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1 0ET
Tel: 020 7215 0366
Email: enquiries@berr.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.berr.gov.uk

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
10-2 Market Towers
1 Nine Elms Lane
London
SW8 SNQ
Tel: 020 7084 2000 or 020 7210 3000
Email: info@mhra.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.mhra.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Lower Ormeau Road
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Tel: 028 9056 9389
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