



CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TATTOOING & HYGIENE STANDARDS REGULATIONS

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1. Introduction

A professional and successful tattoo business supply their clients with professionally competent, safe and hygiene services provided in clean and congenial premises.

Proprietors of these services must become aware of the possible wider effects of the procedures they perform.

Unsafe or unhygienic procedures can not only affect the health of the client but also jeopardize the health of the operator and spread infectious diseases. Procedures involving penetration of the skin that are not performed correctly can lead to transmitting pathogens that cause diseases like Cellulitis, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or AIDS.

It is essential for proprietors to be fully aware of the potential dangers of their procedures and to understand precautions that need to be taken to minimize the likelihood of infections.

Very basic rules that must apply are:

1. The premises must be kept clean and hygienic
2. Any article to be used for penetrating skin must be sterile
3. Any article that has penetrated the skin or is contaminated with blood must be either disposed of appropriately or sterilized before being used on another person.
4. Operators must keep themselves and their clothing clean, any parts of your body or clothing that even potentially come to contact with client's skin must be covered by disposable materials (gloves, aprons, arm covers) Operator must have no exposed cuts, abrasions or wounds.

2. Infections and how they can occur

There is a serious potential for infections to occur during tattooing as the needles used to penetrate the skin get contaminated by blood and when these are not correctly disposed of they can contaminate another person, as traces of blood or serum can enter their bloodstream, which is called cross contamination. Most common and dangerous diseases that could be cross contaminated are:

Cellulitis

Serious skin condition caused by bacterial infection that effects the deeper layers of the skin. This can be caused by prolonged tattoo sessions, compromised immune system of the client or combination of both. It needs to be treated by antibiotics fast as it can lead to septicaemia.

HIV (virus that causes AIDS)

Condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

The condition gradually destroys the immune system, which makes it harder for the body to fight infections. It is spread through sexual contact, blood (accidental needle sticks or by contaminated needles) and from mother to child.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus which attacks and damages the liver. It was a common disease in New Zealand until a vaccine was introduced in the 1980s. It is transmitted by blood, therefore tattooing and piercing is potential cause unless precautions are taken.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a virus that infects the liver. It can cause inflammation and liver disease, along with a range of other conditions such as autoimmune disorders. It is spread through contact with the blood of an infected person. Many New Zealanders have hepatitis C and don't know it. Hepatitis C is a disease with no vaccine, no immunity – and no universal cure.

Blood or serum does not have to be visible on an instrument or needle to be transmitted. Tattoo needles must be appropriately disposed of (the sharps container handed to a specialized operator licenced to destroy bio hazardous materials, such as hospitals etc.). Needles and all instruments that get contaminated (touched) by blood or serum must be sterile for each customer)

2.1 Cross Contamination

Some of the ways cross contamination can occur:

One or more operators share the same equipment or materials

If used and clean instruments come into contact with one another.

If any objects, furnishings or fittings are touched by contaminated materials, most commonly contaminated gloves on your hands, tissues, spatulas etc. and when tattooing another person these

same objects, furnishing and fittings are touched again, with contaminated or yet non contaminated gloves that are going to be used on your client.

It's easy to contaminate ink in bottle by topping up the level of ink that is already contaminated by the blood or serum of client. If the nozzle of ink bottle touches the contaminated ink cap, the bottle must be disposed of as contaminated.

If towels and other articles used on clients are not changed or thoroughly cleaned between clients.

Operators should be aware of the potential unprotected surfaces and equipment to become contaminated with blood or serum during tattooing. Here are some examples:

Adjusting overhead light fittings with contaminated gloves

Adjusting settings on power packs with contaminated gloves

Answering telephones with contaminated gloves

Touching ink bottles or ink trays with contaminated gloves

Touching curtains, drapes or bin lids with contaminated gloves

Not covering clip cord (cable) connected to the machine with disposable cover

dipping in Vaseline (petroleum jelly) or other lubricants with contaminated gloves

2.2 Health and safety in workplace

Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe work environment without risks to the health of the employees, clients or other persons who go onto their premises. In the tattoo and body piercing industry, this safety involves the provision of:

Adequate staff training, including hygiene and infection control.

Properly maintained facilities and equipment, including the provision of protective equipment as gloves, aprons, sleeve protectors, face masks.

2.3 Hepatitis B vaccination

A safe and effective vaccine for the prevention of Hepatitis B is available. It is advised for tattooists, body piercers and staff involved in skin penetration procedures and for staff who may be involved in cleaning skin penetration instruments and equipment. This could be arranged through a local GP.

2.4 Contact with blood or body fluids

Because of the risk of blood borne infections, operators and clients should avoid contact with other people's blood and body fluids. If contact occurs, the following precautions should be taken:

Wash the area of contact thoroughly with soap and warm water

Irrigate the area with water in the case of contact with a mucus membrane.

Encourage bleeding from the wound in case of open wounds and broken skin wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.

Report the contact to your local doctor who will give you advice.

3. Tattooing

3.1 Preparation of work area and setting up equipment

It is very important that you prepare the work area so as to avoid having to leave the client in the middle of a tattooing or body piercing procedure to get any other equipment which may be needed. This increases the risk of cross contamination.

Ensure that the work area is clean and tidy

Make sure all the items needed are within easy reach and that any items not required are removed from the immediate area

Cover any work surfaces with disposable coverings

Cover all instruments and fitting that you frequently touch or may touch with disposable coverings (plastic bag covers for squeeze soapy water bottle, clip cord cover, machine cover, power pack knob cover, light or lamp cover, arm rest cover, massage table/bed cover)

on top of disposable covers, usually plastic or glad wrap, at the point client is resting on (arm rest, massage table), place a medical padding for absorption of any blood, serum or liquids such as soapy water

Hands must be washed thoroughly and disposable gloves are recommended to be worn

Packages containing sterile needles and instruments should be opened in front of the client to demonstrate the sterility of those instruments.

Squeeze, constant flow type of bottles for the soapy solution must be used only, oppose to spray bottles.

Place the required number of single use , disposable ink caps onto your work station (into stainless steel trays, on top of disposable covering or disposable tray. A left over ink must be discarded with the container after each client.

Place water to be used for rinsing between colours in disposable cups and dispose of the water and cups after each client.

Tissues or wipes to be used during tattoo procedures should be stored where they cannot be contaminated.

Replace any sterile instruments accidentally touched by you or contaminated in any other way either or during a treatment with another sterile instrument or needle.

3.2 Skin preparation

The client's skin should be cleaned and free from infection.

If the area to be tattooed needs to be shaved, a disposable safety razor should be used.

Prior to tattooing the skin needs to be disinfected

The skin disinfectant should be applied using a clean swab and should not be sprayed onto the skin.

The time between skin preparation and skin penetration should be at least 2 minutes, preferably 5minutes.

3.3 In tattooing

A detergent-based lotion containing anti-bacterial remedies or stencil solutions may be used on the skin prior to placement of a stencil.

Multiple-use deodorants should never be used prior to the placement of a stencil
the same stencils must not be used on other clients

While tattooing there may be a lubricant used on the skin (glide). It is important that the lubricant is removed from its original container by disposable one use applicator (spatula). If extra lubricant is required a new applicator must be used along wearing new pair of gloves. Left over lubricant must be disposed of.

An anti-bacterial or green soap solution mixed with water may be used for cleansing the tattoo while in progress. A plastic constant flow squeeze bottle with nozzle must be used. This bottle must be covered by a plastic bag to eliminate cross contamination.

Spray bottle must not be used for the soapy solution.

3.4 After tattooing

After the completion of each tattoo session on a client, the following procedure should be carried out:

Clean the tattoo using the soapy solution

Apply a little amount of lubricant, preferably one with soothing antiseptic remedies

Cover the tattoo either with adhesive clear bandage (second skin) or cling film.

Make sure to instruct your client with appropriate after care

As soon as possible dismantle your equipment; any instruments to be cleaned and sterilized must be stored in a special marked 'biohazard' container for proper cleansing and sterilizing.

All coverings and disposable items must be disposed of in a shortest possible time in to a bin marked 'biohazard'. Needles and razors in sharps container.

Move all items that need to be cleaned for sterilization into cleaning area of your shop and clean and sterilise them according to the procedures described in sections 3.5 and 3.6.

Clean your machines, work surfaces and any other items like arm rests, massage tables, bins and so on with a surface disinfectant (60-70% ethyl alcohol or Triclosan Hospital grade disinfectant)

Remove your gloves and place them into bin marked 'biohazard'.

3.5 Cleaning tattoo/body piercing and any instrument contaminated with blood or serum prior to sterilization

As soon as possible after use, reusable instruments must undergo cleaning. This is a crucial first step prior to sterilization. Cleaning should take place in the cleaning set up for this purpose and as far away from your work area/station. Wearing gloves is a must when cleaning/dealing with contaminated instruments. The cleaning area is considered as highly contaminated, therefore it needs to be appropriately marked to prevent clients using it for washing their hand and so on. Cleaning area must be cleaned and disinfected every time it has been used, minimum once a day. It is important that after scrubbing or ultra-sounding your instruments it is rinsed with warm running water to get rid of all the disinfectants. Carefully dry instruments with lint-free, single use disposable towel.

It must be stressed that ultrasonic cleaners do not sterilise or disinfect instruments. However they provide a very safe and effective means of cleaning instruments prior to sterilization. When the

instruments are perfectly clean and dry they are being bagged in sterilising bags with an indicator and ready to be sterilised.

3.6 Sterilising tattoo/body piercing and any other instruments contaminated with blood or serum

All instruments to be sterilised must be clean and bagged in sterilising bags with an indicator. The indicator shows (changes colour) when the correct temperature, pressure and time were reached, making sure its sterile and safe to use on another client. There are two main types of sterilising methods:

Autoclaves – they are operating using high temperatures, usually between 120 to 140 degrees Celsius, they create hot steam by using a little amount of distilled water. The usual time for a process is 20minutes.

Dry heat sterilisers – these do not use water therefore steam to help the process, they use dry heat that circulates in the chamber. The temperatures reach around 170 degrees Celsius and the process takes approximately 45minutes.

Autoclaves are more common these days, B class sterilisers are recommended for its accuracy and record keeping device that could looked back making sure your instruments really are sterile.

Indicator on sterilising bags is also a good way to frequently check the performance of your steriliser and gives you extra assurance when opening the bag in front of client.

Sterilisation could not be reached by using microwave ovens, ultrasonic cleaners, ultraviolet cabinets, boiling water units or similar. Wiping instruments with disinfectant prior to use does not sterilise them.

4. Shop and its designated areas

Any tattoo shop or even an outlet from home must be carefully organised to be effective in keeping the place safe and hygienic for the operator and clients. There are 4 main areas to work with:

Customer waiting area – place where clients undergo consultation with tattooist or waits for the session to start. It must be divided from the work areas for safety reasons like people that are not being tattooed having unrestricted access to the work area, especially kids. It should have sitting facilities, portfolios of artists and should be friendly and clean

Work area – place where the tattooing is undertaken. Must have washable flooring like tiles or linoleum. All furnishings and fitting must be washable and easy to disinfect. Should be equipped with comfortable and safe furnishing for a client, like massage table, hydraulic washable dentist chairs, arm rests and so on.

Work station – is the immediate area where you set up your instruments and tattooing is being done.

Work surface must be made out of non-pores materials such as polished stone or glass. Work station is considered as contaminated area, therefore all items that are not immediately needed for the process should be away from your work station. All surfaces that can get contaminated by touching or by spills must be covered with disposable covers.

Cleaning area – place where cleaning of contaminated instruments is carried out. Must be restricted to clients and clearly marked as 'biohazard area'. Extra precaution should be taken, like wearing gloves at all times in this area.

5. Staff hygiene

Broken skin or infected exposed parts of the body must be kept covered with a dressing that completely covers affected area. Rings should not be worn during tattooing.

5.1 Hands washing

Hand washing is the first step in any infection control program. The surface of hands and nails must be clean before any patient contact. When to wash hands:

Before and after contact with each client

After contact with any blood or other body fluid.

Immediately prior to wearing new disposable gloves and attending a client.

Immediately after removing disposable gloves for any reason.

After carrying a treatment on a client

After handling a nasal tissue.

After smoking

After going to the toilet.

How to wash hands:

Use liquid soap or detergent with warm running water.

Rub hands vigorously during washing for 15 seconds

Wash hands all over including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under fingernails.

Rinse your hands well.

Thoroughly dry hands with a new, single-use, disposable towel or dry them thoroughly under air drier.

6. How to minimise infections

Infection control is the process of minimizing the risks of spreading infections while providing tattooing and piercing services to your clients.

As proprietors of tattooing and/or body piercing business, you must balance the cost and the consequences providing specific infection control procedures against the benefits that will result from their use.

An example of this would be using the latest and safest products available on the market, vigorously following the infection control procedures, going into extend such as disposable aprons and face masks being used while tattooing client.

The blood and body substances of all clients must always be treated as being potentially infectious!

* Infection control procedures are one of yours strong marketing tools. Clean and safe shop will always bring more happy customers.