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CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HYGIENIC TATTOOING

INTRODUCTION

Byelaws have been made by the Council governing the business of tattooing and this Code of Practice sets out requirements that need to be observed to prevent contraventions of the byelaws.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Practitioners must comply with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 which places a duty to conduct such undertakings in such a way as to ensure employees and other persons who may be affected are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

All floors, passages and stairs must be of sound construction and properly maintained. They must also be kept free from obstruction or any substance likely to cause persons to slip. A substantial handrail must be provided to every staircase.

Electrical installations must comply with the requirements of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 and should be subjected to regular inspection and maintenance by a qualified engineer. Supply cables to electrical equipment should be as short as possible and routed in such a way as to prevent a risk of tripping.

Accidents must be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995.

A suitable book must be kept for the recording of the relevant details of accidents which occur on the premises.

Where five or more persons are employed, it is the duty of every employer to prepare and, as often as may be appropriate revise a written statement of his general policy with regard to the health and safety at work of his employees, and the organisation and arrangements for the time being in force for carrying out that policy, and to bring the statement and any revision of it to the notice of all of his employees.

Premises must comply with the requirements of the Chief Fire Officer.

PREMISES

Tattooist's Studios must be clean and be capable of being kept clean. Walls and floors should be washable. These shall be provided and maintained in the premises, a sink properly connected to the drainage system with a supply of clean hot and cold water for the purpose of washing instruments, equipment and containers used in connection with the business.

STERILISATION

The most efficient and reliable form of sterilisation is heat. Moist heat is far more efficient than dry heat, as can be readily seen from the table.

Times and Temperature for Heat Sterilisation
(Medical Research Council Recommendations)

Method	Temperature (°C)	Holding Time * (mins)
Autoclave (Moist Heat)	121	15
	126	10
	134	3
Oven (Dry Heat)	160	45
	170	18
	180	7 ½
	190	1 ½

* The holding time is the time the entire load is held at the recommended temperature.

An AUTOCLAVE is an instrument designed to provide moist heat at a temperature above 100°C (pressure is required to maintain a temperature above 100°C). Instruments to be sterilised have to be scrupulously clean as the steam has to be in contact with the surface of the instruments. The advantages of autoclaves are that they are quick and efficient and with the automatic models, there is no need to time the process.

With DRY HEAT OVENS, much higher temperatures are required (which may damage metal instruments), there may be considerable temperature variation within the oven (hot and cold spots) and a long time is necessary to reach the required temperature and for cooling down. A fan-assisted oven may help to reduce the tendency to hot and cold spots. With the high temperatures of these ovens, there is always a danger of fire and they are not as economical to run as autoclaves. They are, however, cheaper to buy.

DISINFECTION

Disinfectants do not sterilise, they only reduce the number of some microbes. Nevertheless, the intelligent use of a disinfectant is of value. Solutions of hypochlorite and clear phenolics must be freshly made up each day and of glutaraldehyde each week; the manufacturers' instructions regarding the correct concentrations should be strictly followed. Any organic matter or dust adhering to objects to be disinfected will seriously affect the potency of the disinfectant, so that all instruments must be physically clean.

As with heat sterilisation, time is an important factor to take into account when using disinfectants. For most disinfectants, at least half-an-hour's soaking is required.

There shall be provided and maintained on the premises sufficient wash hand basins properly connected to the drainage system, with a supply of clean, running hot and cold water for the purpose of hand washing. It should be sited conveniently accessible to the operating area and provided and maintained with soap, nailbrush and disposable towels or other suitable drying facilities. It is preferable for the taps to wash hand basins to be foot or elbow operated.

Lighting must be adequate. A suitable overall level of lighting would be 500 lux with a higher level of 1000 lux at all working areas in treatment rooms.

There shall be provided and maintained on premises, adequate sanitary accommodation for the use of staff and patrons.

EQUIPMENT

TABLE-TOP AND OTHER SURFACES

The table-top must have a smooth impervious surface, such as plastic-laminate and must be in good repair. It should be wiped down with hot water and detergent or spirit or soluble phenolic between customers and with hypochlorite or soluble phenolic at the end of each session. A clean paper towel should cover the table surface for each new customer. Other surfaces and shelves used must also have a smooth impervious surface and must be kept clean. Equipment not in immediate use should be stored in a cupboard or shelf. Do not clutter the work table unnecessarily.

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT FOR GOOD HYGIENE WILL INCLUDE:-

- Autoclave
- Ultrasonic cleaner
- Autoclavable metal syringe or metal spatula
- Disposable razor or metal safety razor with disposable blades
- Disposable capsule for pigment
- Wide-bore glass or metal tubes in a rack for holding assembled machines
- Paper tissues, towels and cups
- "Sharps" – disposable box for needles
- Autoclavable containers for needles e.g. kidney dish
- Metal forceps
- Alcohol – impregnated swabs (pre-packed)
- Disinfectants
- Pedal operated waste bin with disposable liner.

STERILISATION AND DISINFECTION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Instruments used to pierce a person's skin, or objects in contact with broken skin, should be considered to be contaminated and should not be used again unless they have been sterilised. Sterilisation is the complete removal of all microbes.

Disinfection is a reduction in numbers of microbes to levels where bacterial infection probably will not occur. With regard to hepatitis B virus, disinfection of instruments is not adequate – they have to be sterilised. Nevertheless, disinfectants have a useful function if used intelligently where sterilisation is not possible e.g., on skin or table tops.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Good personal hygiene is important. Clean washable clothing should be worn. A disposable apron or clean overall is acceptable. Hands especially must be clean and nails kept short and clean. If the tattooist has a cut or abrasion or any type of skin infection, on his wrist or hand, he must use gloves while tattooing. It is not necessary to use sterilised surgical gloves, vinyl examination gloves are cheaper and serve the purpose. They should be discarded after one use. Broken skin or infections on other exposed parts of the body, such as the face, should be kept covered with a waterproof plaster.

A first aid kit containing a sufficient supply of suitable materials must be kept on the premises.

PREPARATION AND TATTOOING OPERATION

- (a) Shaving and cleaning of skin: Tattoos should never be carried out within six inches of an infected area of skin or skin covered with a rash. The skin to be tattooed should be wiped over with a "medi-swab" or similar alcohol impregnated swab. A disposable razor, used once for each customer is recommended. If a metal razor is used, only the safety type is acceptable; the blade should be used for one client only, then it should be thrown away. The razor holder must then be autoclaved. A "cut-throat" type razor may nick the skin, is almost impossible to sterilise and must not be used.
- (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. Vaseline from tubes is acceptable. 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 and use of tattoo equipment:
 1. Resterilisable stainless steel needles are recommended. They must be ultrasonically cleaned and autoclaved (see No. 3 and 4 below).
 2. The estimated number of needles needed for one day should be soldered on to the stainless steel rods in advance of a days work with lead-free solder.

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 134⁰C for three 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 bars – must not be sterilised in the autoclave, together with forceps, metal syringe 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 of 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 resterilised 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 place in holders while in use, to avoid the possibility of spillage – these holders should be made of autoclaved 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 customer is tattooed, the needle bars must be disengaged, with the tubes, from the machine and placed in an autocavable dish e.g. stainless steel kidney dish. At the end of the sessions, the needle is "burned off" by flaming from the point to be soldered junctions and unless resterilisable needles are used, the needles are thrown away. Reusable needles must be used once only before

being autoclaved. The needles 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. "cloros" 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 of after each customer.
3. Capsule Holders and Forceps: These must be autoclaved between sessions.
4. Holding Tubes for Motors: These must be autoclaved between sessions.

(f) Care of Skin after Tattooing

The tattooed area should be covered with sterile non-stick gauze (e.g. Melolin) which is then sellotaped to the skin; gauze permits ventilation and aids healing. Antibiotic or antiseptic creams should not be used except under a doctor's supervision when infection has occurred.

DISPOSAL

All waste matter other than needles and including capsules, paper towels and tissues, 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 "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 into a waste bin lined with a plastic bag which can be sealed and suitably disposed of.

HYGIENE PROCEDURE

Before Each Session

- (a) Solder new needles on to rods. If reusable needles, wash needles and rods with hot water and detergent. Wash tubes also with hot water and detergent.
- (b) Use the ultrasound on needles and needle bars.
- (c) Autoclave needles, rods and tubes and pair of forceps in stainless steel dish or perforated metal dish. Leave in autoclave with open door at end of cycle to dry out.
- (d) Clean down table surfaces as instructed.

Before Tattooing

- (e) Wash and dry hands.
- (f) Place large fresh paper towel on table surface before customer places part to be tattooed on table. Place tissue or gauze used to dab tattoo area on towel.
- (g) Clean skin with spirit swab. Shave skin. Throw away razor.
- (h) If transfer is to be used, do this now.
- (i) Arrange required number of pigment capsules in holder, fill with pigment.
- (j) Smear vaseline on area with spatula or gauze swab.
- (k) Attach sterilised needles etc. to motors and begin tattooing.
- (l) Needles attached to motors must not be returned to holding tubes once tattooing has commenced.

After Tattooing

- (m) When tattooing has finished, disengage needles, rods and tubes from motor and place in kidney dish containing detergent and designated for used (“dirty”) instruments.
- (n) Tip remains of pigment with capsules into plastic-lined bins.
- (o) Sellotape gauze to tattooed area.
- (p) Remove paper and all swabs or tissues used on customer, place in bins.
- (q) Damp wipe motors.
- (r) Clean down table surfaces – then begin at (e) again.

At End of Session

- (s) Take “dirty” dish containing used needles etc. to basin and wash thoroughly with hot water and detergent. Take care!
- (t) Also wash forceps and capsule holders.
- (u) Burn off needles if they are not being reused and place in sharps box.
- (v) Ultrasound reusable needles and holders.
- (w) Autoclave needles, holders, tubes, forceps, holding tubes and capsule holders.

RECORDS

It is important to keep records of every customer. This could protect the tattooist. As a minimum, the tattooist should record the name and address of the customer and the date; a record of work done would also be useful. The stated age should also be recorded in the case of younger customers, as well as the steps taken to verify it; this is to ensure compliance with the Tattooing of Minors Act 1969.

Records should be kept for at least three years and kept available for inspection by Local Authority Officers at all times.

A Notice outlining details of the Tattooing of Minors Act 1969 should be displayed in all premises where tattooing is carried out.