

# Tattooing

## Fact sheet for operators

This fact sheet is designed as a guidance tool only to provide tattooists with relevant health information regarding the hygienic provision of tattooing. For more detailed information, see the *Public Health (Infection Control for Personal Appearance Services) Act 2003*, Queensland Development Code – Part 15 – Higher Risk Personal Appearance Services and the Infection Control Guidelines for Personal Appearance Services 2004.

### 1. Introduction

This fact sheet relates to all tattooing, except the staining of skin using henna.

Tattooing is the process of puncturing the skin with a needle to introduce coloured pigment leaving a semi/permanent mark, including cosmetic enhancement (also called cosmetic tattooing, pigment implants, semi/permanent creations, permanent makeup or derma-impigmentation). Cosmetic enhancement involves the same method of application as tattooing and is therefore subject to the same controls and procedures.

The *Public Health (Infection Control for Personal Appearance Services) Act 2003* categorises tattooing as a higher risk personal appearance service and requires tattooists to have accredited infection control qualifications and to ensure their premises are licensed with Council.

The potential for serious infection occurs during tattooing. It is essential for tattooists to be fully aware of the potential dangers of their procedures and to understand the precautions that need to be taken to prevent bacterial, fungal and viral infections, such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

### 2. Premises

The premises must be constructed in compliance with the Queensland Development Code – Part 15 – Higher Risk Personal Appearance Services. The Premises also must be licensed under the *Public Health (Infection Control for Personal Appearance Services) Act 2003* with Council.

Structural items required for all tattooing premises include:

- suitable hand washing facilities including wrist, elbow, knee, foot or sensor operated taps
- floors, walls, ceilings, benches and cupboard surfaces finished in materials suitable to enable easy cleaning
- joints between walls, floors and ceilings such to provide maintenance of hygienic conditions.

### 3. Personal hygiene

Hand washing is the most important measure in preventing the spread of infection. It removes microbial contamination from contact with clients and/or the environment. You must wash your hands:

- before treating a client
- after treating a client
- after smoking or eating
- after going to the toilet
- after cleaning contaminated equipment

Operators must not smoke while attending to a client.

For more information, contact your local Council

## 4. Equipment

Needles and other equipment used for skin penetration must be sterile, disposable, and single-use wherever possible. If re-useable tattooing equipment is chosen, it is recommended that good quality stainless steel needles and instruments be used and maintained for use in tattooing procedures.

Re-useable needles or other skin penetration equipment (tube, nozzle, needle bar, barrel) must be cleaned and sterilised prior to each use. Cosmetic tattooists must only use equipment that has single-use disposable parts which are incapable of allowing blood and body fluid to flow back into the device.

### Needles:

- Do not use hollow (hypodermic) needles for tattooing as skin damage will occur. Also, the needles cannot be effectively cleaned and sterilised.
- Handle sterile needles with sterile forceps.
- Should the operator accidentally touch a needle at any stage during the process, it must be replaced immediately by a sterile needle.
- Needles must not be tested for sharpness on the operator's skin before use.
- Check needles or equipment for defects by inspection or insertion into a sterile pad before use. Dispose of any needles that exhibit burrs, hooks, damage or blunt points to prevent injury to clients.

### Razors:

- Use a disposable plastic safety razor on one client only.
- If a standard safety razor with a disposable blade is used, dispose of the razor or blade after use on one client.
- Traditional cutthroat razors are not recommended for use.

### Dyes (not sterile):

- Tattooing inks, dyes, pigments or solutions(s) used for one client must not be used for another client.
- Dispense enough solution for one client into sterile disposable containers; discard container and left over solution upon completion.
- If non-disposable containers are used, they must be cleaned and sterilised prior to each use.
- Ink must be stored in a way that protects it from contamination.
- Water or other liquid used for mixing inks must be free from contamination (ie use treated drinking water or ethyl alcohol).

### Stencils:

- Single-use stencils, screens or patterns are highly recommended for tattooing.
- All re-useable stencils, screens or patterns must be effectively cleaned and disinfected before re-use.
- Fix stencil to client's skin using clean soapy water (this soapy water must not be re-used on another client).
- Do not apply stencils with re-useable applicators (eg deodorant sticks).
- Apply products like petroleum jelly to the skin with a sterile spatula or applicator.
- Clean all implements and containers after use.

### Cosmetic tattooing or micro-pigmentation machines:

- Machine or needle tips, needles and the machine barrel casing must be clean and sterile.
- After the tattooing procedure for each client is completed, wipe the casing covering the motor with a clean paper towel moistened with warm water and detergent and allow the casing to air dry.

## 5. Procedures

- Cover any work surfaces with disposable coverings or clean linen. Change these coverings between clients.
- Open sterile equipment at the start of the procedure and either place equipment on a sterile surface/tray, or remove it directly from packaging as required.
- Prior to tattooing, the skin around the site must be cleaned with a skin antiseptic. For the area around the eyes, the site must be cleaned with warm water.
- Shave the site using a single-use disposable safety razor where possible.
- Wash hands, thoroughly pat dry and put on new single-use gloves.
- Tattoo an outline of the design on the skin.
- Tattoo the colour or shade of the outline on the skin.
- Use pre-dispensed cleaning solution and single-use wipes to remove excess pigment and blood from the tattoo site and dispose of wipes into the clinical and related waste container.
- Remove antiseptic cream from a single-use container and apply to the tattoo site using a single-use spatula.
- Cover site with a sterile dressing.
- Remove gloves and wash and dry hands.
- Change the needle assembly or handpiece after each client use.

## 6. Post-treatment

- Dispose of all used single-use items (other than sharps), such as gloves, applicators, ink caps, used tissues and wipes, into the infectious waste bin.
- Remove the elastic bands and plastic coverings from the tattoo machine and dispose of them into the Infectious Waste bin.
- Dismantle tubes, needles and needle bars from the tattoo machine and place them into a puncture-resistant sterilisable container.
- Clean the area and all equipment:
  - tattoo machine – first wipe with a clean dry cloth, then wipe with a clean cotton wool or a pad saturated with 70% w/w ethyl alcohol. Allow to dry naturally. Store handpiece in a clean puncture proof covered container.
  - motor – use warm water and detergent on a moistened paper towel, then allow to dry.
  - needle and needle bar - clean and sterilise before breaking the needle and disposing into a sharps waste container.
- Clean all storage items, including containers and their lids.
- Clean and sterilise or dispose of ink cap trays.

Provide your client with after-care information to avoid infection, including:

- cleaning of site
- infections and what to look for
- general care instructions
- healing times
- demonstrate to the client how to care for the tattoo to prevent infection
- provide the same information in writing
- ensure the client has fully understood these instructions.