



Advice for the beauty therapy industry

The following information has been developed to assist the beauty therapy industry with questions relating to skin penetration. This information is to be read in conjunction with:

- [Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures \(PDF 324KB\)](#).
- [Skin penetration and the law](#)

Some beauty therapy procedures such as waxing, shaving, cosmetic tattooing, tweezing and electrolysis are considered a skin penetration procedure.

If you are an operator providing any of these services, you need to be aware of the potential health risks and the importance of following correct infection control guidelines to prevent the spread of infections.

There are a number of health risks that may be associated with various skin penetration procedures performed by the beauty therapy industry. These may include:

- viral infections (for example hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS)
- bacterial infections (for example *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Staphylococcus epidermidis*)
- fungal infections (for example *Candida albicans*).
- excessive bleeding
- scarring
- exposure to toxic chemicals or dyes
- allergies.

Local government environmental health officer can inspect a premises at any time to ensure the owner and employees are complying with the [Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures \(PDF 324KB\)](#)

The owner of an establishment who does not comply with the Code is committing an offence, and may face penalties under the *Health (Skin Penetration Procedures) Regulations 1998* ([external site](#)).

Disposal of sharps and contaminated waste

It is important to contact your local government environmental health officer to discuss the disposal of contaminated wastes and sharps in your local area.

Visit the [Western Australia Local Government Authority](#) ([external site](#)) for a list of local government contact details.

Waxing

Reuse of depilatory wax (semi-critical procedure)

Body hair can accumulate micro-organisms on the skin. Removing body hair with wax also removes these micro-organisms and contaminates the wax in the process.

Melting down the used wax does not destroy these micro-organisms and reusing this wax could lead to the transmission of diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

It is also important to remember that tiny amounts of blood may also be extracted from small scabs or hair follicles during the waxing process, not all of which will be visible.

All wax must be single use only and disposed of after each use on a client.

Separating unused wax and used wax (semi-critical procedure)

It is important to separate unused wax from wax to be used on a client. This will prevent cross contamination of micro-organisms to the unused wax stock. To achieve this, all wax should be poured or removed from stock using a new clean spatula or ladle and placed into a clean container prior to each client treatment. If more wax is needed use a new spatula.

If a ladle is being used to remove wax from stock, you do not necessarily need a new ladle each time, provided the ladle does not come into contact with any material that is in use on the client.

Disposable spatulas and containers should be discarded appropriately after use. Wooden spatulas used to apply strip wax should only be used on 1 client and then disposed of. If metal spatulas are used they must be cleaned and disinfected between clients.

Any reusable containers should be cleaned and disinfected between clients.

Roll-on wax (semi-critical procedure)

There are a number of roll-on wax products on the market where wax is stored in a container and then rolled onto the skin with roller heads.

The wax that is rolled onto the skin may re-circulate back into the container and can contaminate unused wax.

Therefore once this product is used on one client, the wax in the container must be thermally disinfected before it can be used on a second client (unless the product manufacturer can prove to the Department of Health that the wax in the container will not be contaminated).

The roller head and the container must also be cleaned and disinfected after each use to remove any used wax residue and other micro-organisms.

Advice for clients after waxing

Therapists may wish to advise their clients that after waxing the pores in the skin can remain open for up to 48 hours, making skin more sensitive to ultraviolet light.

It is recommended therapists advise clients not to sunbathe or to have a solarium treatment for at least 48 hours after being waxed.

Electrolysis

Electrolysis hair removal involves using a needle to penetrate the skin surrounding a hair follicle. This could result in the contamination of the needles with small amounts of blood and bodily fluids.

The transmission of blood borne infections then becomes possible.

Only single use electrolysis needles are permitted for use in for electrolysis treatments.

Sterile needles must be inserted into the electrolysis equipment at the start of a treatment. The same needle can be used for removing multiple hairs necessary from one client during a single session.

Used needles must be disposed of into a sharps container upon completion of the procedure.

The needle used for one client cannot be stored and then reused for the same client at future electrolysis sessions. A new sterile needle must be used for every treatment.

It is essential that the operator wears clean gloves and has clean hands before and after every treatment session.

Lancing skin (critical procedure)

Lancing of the skin involves treatments such as the removal of blackheads, pimples and ingrown hairs, by penetrating the skin using a sharp instrument called a lance.

Sterile single use equipment must be used for this process.

Tweezing (semi-critical procedure)

Tweezers should be rinsed off with warm water, then immersed in detergent and water and scrubbed under water with a clean brush after they have been used on a client.

Where tweezers become contaminated with blood or body fluids they should be cleaned and disinfected between clients in accordance with the Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures.

Pedicures and manicures

Clients with visible nail or skin infections should be referred to a health professional before having a manicure or pedicure.

Pedicures (semi-critical procedure)

During a pedicure treatment it is possible to contract a fungal, bacterial or viral infection from dirty nail care tools and equipment.

Equipment used for rasping (scraping) corns and calluses on feet should be cleaned and disinfected after each client in accordance with the Code.

It is recommended by the Department of Health that single-use disposable files are used for each client and discarded afterwards. Other non-disposable files and instruments must be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the Code.

There have been cases of bacterial infections associated with whirlpool foot spas that were not sufficiently cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis.

If you use foot spas in the salon they need to be drained, cleaned and disinfected after each client. The intake filter should also be removed, cleaned and soaked in disinfectant every week.

Note: Clients' feet should be washed prior to a pedicure.

Manicuring (semi-critical procedure)

Fungal, viral and bacterial infections can be easily spread during manicure treatments. It is very easy to cut a client's skin when cutting cuticles or to break the skin if you file too deeply.

To avoid the transmission of infections, it is recommended that all instruments are single use and disposed of immediately after use, or suitably cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the Code.

Any manicure instrument that may have been contaminated with blood or other bodily fluids must be cleaned and disinfected.

Note: Clients should wash their hands prior to a manicure.

Cosmetic tattooing (critical procedure)

Cosmetic tattooing processes involve the same processes as a standard tattooing procedure.

Cosmetic tattooing can also be referred to as:

- micro-pigmentation
- pigment implants
- semi-permanent creations
- permanent makeup, or derma-impigmentation.

Cosmetic tattooing must be performed in accordance with the Code, particularly in relation to sterilising appliances.

The needle chamber from the permanent cosmetic machines should be detachable so it can be cleaned and sterilised.

Note: There are serious penalties for tattooing a minor in any way. Read more about the age limits for skin penetration procedures.

Creams powders or ointments

The most effective way to dispense ointments is by using self-dispensing pump packs. This prevents cross contamination of the ointment.

When refilling pump pack containers, the self-dispensing pump should be cleaned before refilling the container.

To avoid cross-contamination, any products contained in a tub, such as makeup, powders or creams, should be removed from the stock by using a clean single use applicator.

The same applicator should not be used on another client or dipped back into the original container. After removing the applicator from the container, any extra cream or ointment should be disposed of and not returned to the original container.

Ultraviolet light cabinets

Ultraviolet (UV) cabinets do not sterilise equipment.

UV light will not penetrate all surfaces of exposed appliances and some viruses, including HIV, can still survive.

Microwave ovens, pressure cookers, incubators, boiling water units, ultrasonic cleaners and other similar appliances are not sterilising machines.

Similarly, wiping equipment and appliances will not sterilise the item.

Terms explained

Critical procedure This is a procedure where instruments enter or penetrate the skin, for example acupuncture needles, lances, etc.

Semi-critical procedure This is a procedure where instruments are likely to come into contact with mucosa or blood, but do not penetrate the skin. Such instruments include tweezers, emery boards, cuticle scissors, etc.

Further information

Contact the relevant local government Environmental Health Services ([external site](#)) for further advice about starting a business, making a complaint about a business operating in a local district or for general skin penetration advice.

For information on occupational health and safety visit [WorkSafe Western Australia \(external site\)](#) or phone 1300 307 877.