**What are the risks?**
A variety of infections can be passed from operator to customer and from customer to operator if strict hygiene is not observed. These range from general infections involving red, painful swelling of the skin, sepsis and fever to hepatitis and AIDS.

**What does the law say?**
If you carry out the business of electrolysis you must be registered with the City Council. Failure to register may lead to a fine of up to £1,000. Application forms are available on request from City Services, Environmental Health - Commercial Section, telephone 02476 831848.

Registration is dependent on compliance with the City Council’s byelaws. You also have a duty of care for your employees and your customers under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The maximum penalty under this Act is an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment for up to 2 years.

**What should I know about hepatitis and AIDS?**

**Hepatitis**
The spread of hepatitis is one of the main risks in any skin piercing operation. Hepatitis is an unpleasant infection of the liver which can be very severe and sometimes results in patients being lifelong carriers of the disease without showing symptoms.

The organism of most concern to practitioners of skin piercing is Hepatitis B virus. This virus spreads rapidly from person to person by contact with small amounts of infected blood, serum or tissue fluid. It has been known to survive for eight years on inanimate surfaces in a laboratory.

Less than a thimble full of blood from a carrier could infect 12,500 persons. Tiny abrasions on the skin, or procedures such as skin piercing cause a clear film to exude; this is equally infectious.

The source of Hepatitis B virus is man and in most cases long-term carriers are symptomless.

At least one person has died of Hepatitis contracted as a result of unsatisfactory skin piercing techniques. Blood or serum does not have to be visible on the needle or instrument to transmit infection.

**AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)**
This condition is a cause of world-wide concern at present, as the established disease is invariably fatal. Though only a percentage infected with the causative virus (known as HIV) develop the disease.
The mode of infection is similar to that of Hepatitis B, namely sexual contact and activities that involve getting infected blood into another person’s blood stream.

Ear piercing, tattooing, acupuncture, and electrolysis, have not so far as is known, been implicated to date, but the risk in all of these is significant if proper safeguards are not in place.

**What must I do to prevent infection?**
You must adopt high standards of hygiene if infection is to be prevented and follow correct operating procedures. You must ensure that your employees do the same. The notes below should provide guidance and a recommended operating procedure is attached as an appendix.

**Health of the Client**
You must ask the client whether he/she is suffering from any infectious disease, or the non-infectious condition known as Psoriasis. In either case skin piercing should not take place without consulting a doctor.

**Personal Hygiene**
You must ensure that your own health and hygiene does not endanger the health of the client. Observance of high standards of personal hygiene is essential. All cuts and wounds must be washed and dressed with a waterproof dressing. You should wear clean washable or disposable clothing while carrying out electrolysis. You should refrain from smoking, eating or drinking whilst engaged on treatment. Nails must be kept short and clean.

If you have any cuts or abrasions, or any type of skin infection on the hand or wrist you must use gloves while carrying out treatment. These can be vinyl examination gloves, it is not necessary to use sterilized surgical gloves. Gloves should be single use and discarded afterwards. The routine use of gloves is recommended, as they provide some protection against the viral infections already mentioned above.

**Premises**
It is recommended that treatment be carried out in a screened area or separate room. These areas must be kept clean at all times. A clean table surface covered with plastic laminate or other impervious material should be available. It is essential to have a wash basin with hot and cold running water, bactericidal soap and paper towels. The operator should wash their hands at least before and after each session. To facilitate this the wash hand basin should be in the same room. If this is not possible, it should be in an easily accessible position near to the treatment area.

**Records**
It is essential to keep records of the name and address of every client and the date of treatment. Records should be kept for at least one year and records for 2006 should not be discarded until January 1st 2008.
Aftercare
There is a small risk of bacterial infection after electrolysis. The epilated area should be kept dry. Any infection should be treated by a doctor and antibiotic lotions or creams should not be used except when prescribed by a doctor. Apart from surgical spirit, disinfectants should not be used as they may cause an allergic reaction.

Disposal
All waste matter except needles and including swabs, paper towels and tissue should be collected in a sealable plastic bag or box and incinerated, or autoclaved before disposal. Particular care should be taken with the disposal of needles, a stout sharps only box 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 by incineration or into a waste bin lined with a plastic bag which can be sealed and incinerated.

Special arrangements must be made for the disposal of the sharps boxes and sealed waste bags as they should not be allowed to enter the public refuse collection system.

The Council provides a service for special trade waste collection, this can be arranged by contacting Commercial Waste at the Whitley Depot on telephone: 0500 834333.

What methods are acceptable?
Since it is possible that the skin may be pierced during electrolysis, hygienic precautions are necessary to ensure that infection is not transmitted from person to person.

The whole needle needs to be sterilised between clients and unless an autoclave or sterilisation oven is available, the only acceptable method is the use of pre-sterilised disposable needles.

Wiping with disinfectant or surgical spirit is not adequate for sterilisation. Neither is the heat produced by the current that passes through the needle. The temperature attained by the needle is unlikely to exceed 80 degrees Celsius, at which temperature sterilisation does not occur. Moreover the current passes for only 1 or 2 seconds.

The practice employed by some practitioners of testing equipment on themselves prior to use on the client is not acceptable.

Appendix

Recommended Procedures

Before each session:
1. Wash hands at the beginning of the session.
2. Place a clean paper tissue on the table top.
3. Clean the area to be epilated with a spirit swab.
4. Clean the operator’s hands with a fresh spirit swab.
5. Clean forceps with a fresh spirit swab.
6. Open the pre-sterilised needle packet carefully, following the instructions on the packet, or carefully retrieve the needle from the autoclave/sterilisation oven. Do not touch the sharp end of the shaft.
7. Insert the needle into the electrolysis machine and begin epilation procedure.
8. At the end of the treatment, dispose of the needle into a sharp box, or place the needle in a receptacle to await sterilisation. Do not touch the sharp end of the shaft of the needle. Tissues and swabs should be discarded into a plastic lined bin.
9. Clean the epilated skin with a fresh spirit swab.

**Treatment of Spider veins and broken capillaries**

Some beauty clinics treat "spider veins" by injecting them with a sclerosant. For this procedure only pre-sterilised syringes and needles are acceptable. The skin should be wiped first with a spirit swab and the needle and syringe discarded after each treatment. A used needle should not be inserted into a sclerosant - if a refilling is required for a patient, a new needle and syringe must be used. If broken capillaries or spider veins are treated by diathermy or galvanic current, the procedure of hair electrolysis should be followed.

For further information, please contact:

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Fact Sheet No. HS21 Electrolysis CoP

Last Revised: April 2006