
BODY PIERCING GUIDELINES

Body Piercing is potentially an extremely hazardous practice if performed badly.

It should only be practiced by a competent, trained and experienced person at suitable premises.

Novice piercers should have shadowed an experienced piercer and performed piercings under supervision.

This guidance aims to offer advice to Local Government Officers and body piercers regarding the practice of body piercing and outlines specific recommended hygienic procedures.

In no way should this document be seen as approval or providing a definitive safe method.

General

1. The operator and premises should be registered by the Local Authority under Section 15 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, and Section 236 of the Local Government Act 1972, to carry out skin piercing, (preferably tattooing, as this will ensure the minimum of good general hygienic conditions and practice).

In some instances (where the operator is not a tattooist), the premises and practices must never the less meet with the requirements of the most relevant skin piercing Byelaws, eg. Ear Piercing.

Specifics

2. The operator shall be able to show knowledge of possible contra-indications and shall discuss the client's medical history with him or her accordingly, to include the following:
 - Heart disease;
 - Eczema;
 - Impetigo;
 - Genital warts - if relevant to the piercing requested;
 - Allergic responses to: anesthetics, adhesive plasters, and jewellery metals such as nickel;
 - Hemorrhaging;
 - Fainting;
 - Seizures - eg. epilepsy;
 - Diabetes;
 - HIV infection etc.

Where any of the above conditions exist, or there is a past history, written authorisation from the client's GP shall be required.

3. Prior to piercing, a written record shall be kept of the client's personal details, relevant medical history, and any piercings carried out by the operator.
4. To minimise the consequences of fainting, the client should be in a reclined position when piercing is carried out.

NB. This is not appropriate for tongue piercing as there is a risk of swallowing jewellery, or the tongue itself.

5. There shall be prominently displayed on the premises a notice informing clients of the possible risks consequent to body piercing, to include:
 - Blood poisoning, (septicaemia);
 - Localised severe swelling and trauma around the piercing site;
 - Scarring;
 - Jewellery embedding;
 - Localised infection e.g. sepsis or urethritis;
 - Allergic reactions to jewellery metals and antiseptics.

6. There must be a first aid kit which complies with Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, and the piercer should have a qualification in basic first aid.
7. It is strongly recommended that body piercers are vaccinated for the Hepatitis B Virus.
8. The administering of local anesthetic injections other than by a registered medical practitioner is an offence.
9. Ethyl Chloride should be used with extreme caution, only by operators who understand it's hazards and limitations.
10. The operator shall not be under the influence of drugs, alcohol or other substances.
11. The client shall not be under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other substances.
12. Prior to piercing, the operator shall "surgical scrub" with soap and hot water (nails, hands, and elbows), dry with clean disposable paper towels and then wear new disposable rubber gloves for each client.
13. Needles must be pre-packed and pre-sterilised, and only used once before proper disposal in an approved sharps box. Hollow needles should be a minimum of 1.55mm in diameter. A maximum piercing size of 2.5mm should help to reduce healing complications.
14. Warning! Piercing should not take place close to a muscle.
15. A hands away technique (e.g. using sterilised forceps) shall be used where practicable, to reduce the risk of skin and soft tissue infections and injury to the piercer. The piercing needle shall be held as far away from the tip as possible whilst affording adequate control of the needle.
16. The operator must be aware of the risks involved in the incorrect or prolonged use of forceps. Used forceps must be stored away from sterilised equipment, and must be sterilised before they are used again.
17. If the piercing site is to be marked, it shall be done prior to cleansing and such marking shall be carried out with a fine indelible pen. In every case the skin in the area of the piercing site must be appropriately cleansed (using a skin safe disinfecting liquid) before piercing.
18. A suitable surface local anesthetic may be applied to the area using a clean disposable applicator, (eg. a new piece of sterile gauze) for each application. A spray is permissible. A test (of sensitivity) to check the effectiveness of the anesthetic is recommended before piercing occurs.
19. Jewellery shall be of suitable grade surgical steel or high carat gold and must be sterilised and kept in sterile conditions until inserted.

20. Ear piercing guns are not appropriate for other parts of the body.
21. The operator shall not place the back butterfly clip onto the piercing stud when nose piercing.
22. There shall be no attempt to increase the size of a piercing until it is completely healed. Such increasing should be carried out gradually by the insertion of progressively larger gauge sterile jewellery. No subsequent bleeding or tearing should occur.
23. Clients shall be given verbal and written information regarding body piercing to include:
 - Normal bathing and showering is permitted but otherwise keep dry.
 - Clean hands before touching jewellery.
 - Turn jewellery when wound is not dry.
 - Do not cover wound closely, to permit access to air.
 - Expected healing times of wounds.
 - Possible indications that complications have occurred.
 - Advice on how to deal with minor redness / swelling / pain.
Recommendation to consult a GP if the problem does not improve within 24 hours.
 - Not to just remove jewellery if an infection occurs.
24. It is recommended that a minimum age limit of 18 is agreed by the piercer (unless parental consent is given).
25. The facilities and conditions on the premises must comply with current Health and Safety Legislation.