
CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE HYGIENIC REMOVAL OF HAIR USING ELECTROLYSIS AND TREATMENT OF SPIDER VEINS

INTRODUCTION

It is the duty of every employer and self employed person to conduct their undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that he and/or other persons are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

Successful hair removal by electrolysis requires the insertion of a fine needle along the shaft of a hair to its root. Since by this technique the skin may be pierced, hygienic precautions are necessary to ensure that infection is not transmitted from person to person.

Byelaws have been made by the Council governing the practice of electrolysis and the hygienic conditions of the premises and staff. This Code of Practice sets out requirements that need to be observed to prevent contraventions of the byelaws.

PREMISES, EQUIPMENT AND STAFF

The requirements relating to the above are covered fully in the byelaws.

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 eg. on skin or table tops.

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	7½
	190	1½

** 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 temperature 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 hypochlorate 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 hours soaking is required.

RECOMMENDED METHODS

1. Disposable Needles: Sterile disposable needles are available on the market (eg. Sterex) and are recommended. One needle may be used for removing as many hairs as necessary from one client but the needle must be discarded after the treatment and a new needle obtained for the next client.

2. Sterilisation of Needles: The electrologist may, if he wishes, sterilise the needles himself but the cost of this is likely to prove prohibitive.
3. Treatment of Spider Veins and Broken Capillaries: If spider veins are treated by injecting them with a sclerosant 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 for hair electrolysis should be followed. A fresh sterilise disposable needle should be used on each client and then discarded.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE FOR HAIR ELECTROLYSIS

1. Wash hands at beginning of session.
2. Seat customer.
3. Place clean paper tissue or towel on table top.
4. Clean area to be epilated with spirit swab (eg. medi-swab).
5. Clean operator's hands with spirit swab.
6. Clean forceps with spirit swab.
7. Open pre-sterilised needle packet carefully, as instructed. DO NOT touch the sharp end or the shaft.
8. Insert into electrolysis machine and begin epilation procedure.
9. At end of procedure dispose of needle into sharps box - again do not touch sharp end or shaft of needle. Tissues and swabs should be discarded in plastic-lined bin.
10. Clean epilated skin with fresh swabs.
11. Begin again at 2

AFTER-CARE

There is a small risk of bacterial infection after electrolysis. The epilated area should be kept dry. Infection should be treated by a doctor - antibiotic lotions, creams or ointments should not be used, except when prescribed by a doctor. Apart from surgical spirit, disinfectants should not be used, as they may cause an allergy.

RECORDS

It is advisable to keep a record of the name and address of every customer, the date and treatment given.