

Hairdressing

Client health information

Hairdressing is a relatively safe practice, however infection can occur during hairdressing procedures. Items such as razors, scissors, combs, clippers and hairpins can accidentally penetrate the skin.

If you are concerned about cleanliness and risk of infection you should discuss these processes with your hairdresser.

What to look for

- Look for a 'certificate of premises registration' from the local council displayed in the shop.
- Look for clean hygienic facilities at premises, such as benches, sinks etc.
- Ask the therapist if they use clean or new equipment each time. If they reuse, how do they sterilise or disinfect their equipment?
- Mobile hairdressers must also have a 'certificate of premises registration' from their local council.

Risks

Infections that can be spread in hairdressing premises include skin infections on the scalp, face and neck such as impetigo (also known as school sores) and fungal infections such as tinea capitis and ringworm. These infections can spread when instruments and equipment used on clients are not cleaned between client sessions or are not handled or used in a hygienic manner, and when structural facilities such as furnishings and fittings are not kept clean and in good repair.

Blood-borne viruses such as hepatitis B and C and HIV can occur when using razors, scissors or clippers, which can abrade the skin and/or cut accidentally. Contaminated instruments can transfer infection directly to the blood of another individual (for example, the operator or next client) if that individual has open cuts, sores or broken skin.

Burns can occur during hairdressing procedures involving hot rollers, tongs and crimpers. They can also occur where hair is being washed with water that is too hot or when stationary or hand-held dryers are improperly used. Operators should be familiar with first aid procedures for burns.

People get **head lice** from direct hair-to-hair contact with someone who has head lice. Head lice do not transmit any infectious diseases and there is no evidence to suggest that the environment is of significant concern in their transmission. They are fragile insects, easily killed by water temperatures greater than 60°C. No disinfection or fumigation of the salon is required if a client has presented with head lice. For more information specifically related to head lice see www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice.

Operator requirements

Use and disposal of razors and blades

All razors and blades are considered to be contaminated with blood, body fluids or substances after use. Routine cleaning of razor blades is not adequate to minimise the risk of transmission of blood-borne diseases. The safest and most efficient way of preventing the spread of these diseases is to use single-use items.

If a **disposable razor** is used, then it must not be used again on another client and must be disposed of in a suitable sharps container immediately after use.

Where a safety razor is used, the blade should be removed from the razor body, and disposed of as above. The blade holder must be cleaned and disinfected between clients by washing in warm water and detergent, rinsing in hot running water and drying with a lint free cloth. If contaminated it must be sterilised or disposed

of.

Electric razor blades are also considered contaminated with blood, body fluids or substances after use. The blades, mesh and the blade mechanism housing are difficult to clean and will not withstand the sterilisation process. Debris from shaving, such as blood, hair and skin cells, have been found in the body and motor of electric razors. Electric razors are therefore not recommended for use on clients.

Clippers should be used in such a way that the operator can see the tip of the clippers at all times. Clippers, including those with plastic attachments, should be dismantled after each use and thoroughly cleaned before being used on another client. If contamination occurs, then the clipper blades must be dismantled, cleaned and sterilised and plastic attachments must be disposed of into a sharps container.

Hairdressing equipment such as **scissors, combs, hair and neck brushes, rollers, hot tongs, crimpers** etc should be first cleaned by using a lint free cloth to remove hair. They should then be washed in warm water and detergent, rinsed in running water and dried with a lint free cloth.

Ultraviolet (UV) cabinets cannot be used to sterilise equipment because not all surfaces of an item are penetrated. They should not be used to store equipment either because the UV rays may damage the items or their packaging.

Storing of equipment in **disinfectant** solutions is not recommended.

For further information contact your local council health department or the Communicable Disease Control Unit of the Department of Human Services on 1300 651 160.

www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas

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