

3. Hairdressing

3.1 General

Infection can occur during hairdressing procedures. Items such as razors, scissors, combs, clippers and hairpins can accidentally penetrate the skin. Blood and body fluids do not have to be visible on instruments, equipment or working surfaces for infection to be transmitted. Both clients and operators are at risk.

Operators should ask clients if they have any skin lesions such as prominent moles and require them to specify the location so appropriate care can be taken. If hairdressing premises perform other personal care and body art procedures, including skin penetration, then the operators should follow the relevant sections in these guidelines.

3.2 Risks

3.2.1 Infection

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.

3.2.2 Blood-borne viruses

A risk of the transmission of a serious disease 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.

3.2.3 Other risks

Burns

Burns can occur during hairdressing procedures involving hot rollers, tongs and crimpers. They can also occur when 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 (see part A, section 3.2.3).

Pediculosis or head lice

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. See www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice.

3.3 First aid and occupational exposure to blood

See part A, section 3.

3.4 General hairdressing equipment

3.4.1 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.

Single use (disposable) razors

If the razor is a single-use type, then it must not be used again on another client and must be disposed of into a suitable sharps container immediately after use.

Single use (disposable) blades

Where a safety-type razor is used, remove the blade from the razor body, taking care not to cut yourself. Dispose of the blade as above. The blade holder must be cleaned and disinfected between clients. If contaminated, it must be sterilised or disposed of. Do not use the body of the razor again until these measures have been taken.

Electric razors

Electric razor blades are considered contaminated with blood, body fluids or substances after use in the same way that other razors and blades are contaminated. The blades, mesh and the blade mechanism housing are difficult to clean and will not withstand the sterilisation process. This difficulty is due to their design and the materials from which they are made. 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 and should not be loaned to clients.

Razor haircutting

Razors should be used so the operator can see the blade at all times. Blades may scrape the skin and become contaminated. Razor blades used for hair cutting should be changed after each client, and the blade should be disposed of into a sharps container. The handle should be washed and dried after the blade has been removed; if contaminated, it also requires sterilisation. See part A, sections 5 and 6 and section 2.4.1.

3.4.2 Clippers

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. Plastic attachments must be disposed of into a sharps container.

3.4.3 Ultraviolet (UV) cabinets

These cabinets do not sterilise instruments and other articles placed in them because the UV radiation does not penetrate to all surfaces. Some viruses are not particularly susceptible to UV radiation, and UV cabinets are not suitable storage receptacles because the UV rays damage combs and brushes, and compromise sterile packaging. See part A, section 6.2 and 6.3.

3.5 Cleaning and sterilisation of hairdressing equipment

Over the years, many types of disinfecting solutions have been used in the hairdressing industry. The use of disinfectants requires operators to apply these solutions in strict accordance with the manufacturer's directions. Due to the problems experienced, the use of disinfecting solutions is not recommended.

Table 9 provides a guide on cleaning requirements for equipment commonly used in the hairdressing industry. The main references for the table are part A, sections 2, 5 and 6. Any item that accidentally penetrates or abrades the skin must be considered and dealt with as a high-risk category item. These items include, but are not limited to, scissors, combs, clippers, hair pins/clips and razors used for hair cutting. Any item dropped on the floor must be cleaned and dried, or discarded as per the table.

Table 9: Cleaning requirements for hairdressing equipment

| | Equipment | Reason/risk | When | How | Additional information |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|-------------------|---|--|
| High risk | Single-use razors | Potential for skin infections or blood-borne virus transmission | After each client | Dispose of into a sharps container. | See part A, section 2.4.1. |
| | Safety razors | Potential for skin infections or blood-borne virus transmission | After each client | Dispose of blade into sharps container. Wash handle in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry with lint-free cloth. If contaminated sterilise or dispose of into a sharps container. | |
| | Electric razors | Potential for skin infections or blood-borne virus transmission | Do not use. | | <i>Note:</i> Electric razors cannot withstand immersion or sterilisation |
| Intermediate risk | Shaving brushes | Potential for infection if previous client has facial skin lesions or infection | After each client | Rinse free of hair and shaving cream. Wash in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry thoroughly. | <i>Note:</i> Brushes and plastic items will not withstand the sterilisation process. |

Table 9: Cleaning requirements for hairdressing equipment *continued*

| | Equipment | Reason/risk | When | How | Additional information |
|----------|--|---|--|--|---|
| Low risk | Scissors Clippers | Potential for infection or infestation | After each client | Use lint-free cloth to remove hair. Wash in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry with lint-free cloth. | Scissors become high risk if they penetrate or abrade the skin. <i>Note:</i> Plastic clipper attachments will not withstand the sterilisation process. |
| | Haircutting razors | Potential for infection or infestation | After each client | Sterilise or dispose of if blood is drawn. Dispose of blades into sharps container. | See above note on safety razors. |
| | Combs Hair brushes Hairnets Neck brushes Ear caps Hair pins/clips | Potential for infection or infestation | After each client and when dropped on the floor | Use lint-free cloth to remove hair. Wash in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry with lint-free cloth. | <i>Note:</i> Brushes and plastic items will not withstand the sterilisation process. Dispose of any piece of equipment that pierces the client's skin into a sharps container. |
| | Rollers – Regular – Hot – Hot tongs – Crimpers | Potential for infection or infestation | After each client and when dropped on the floor | Use lint-free cloth to remove hair. Wash in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry with lint-free cloth. | Store in covered containers. For a risk of burns, see part A, section 3.2. |
| | Bottles – Shampoo – Conditioner Shaving bowls | Potential for contamination | When empty | Wash in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry thoroughly with lint-free cloth before refilling. | Never top up. |
| | Dye mixing bowls | Potential for contamination | When empty | Wash in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry with lint-free cloth. | Prevent residual dyes from being mixed into new preparations. |
| | Capes/wraps | Potential for infection if previous client has neck skin lesions or infection | After each client unless a clean towel or paper tape is used around neck | Wash in warm water and detergent. Rinse in hot running water. Dry according to type of material. | Launder—see part A, section 2.3.5. Use a clean towel or paper tape around neck. |
| | Equipment trolley | Prevention of dust and hairs from accumulating or contaminating clean equipment | Weekly | Use lint-free cloth to remove hair. Wash with warm water and detergent. Dry thoroughly with lint-free cloth before refilling. | Ensure items such as rollers are in closed containers. Cover when not in use. |

3.6 Mobile hairdressing

Mobile hairdressers must register their principle place of business (for example, their residence) with local government. They should comply with these guidelines, thus maintaining the cleanliness of equipment and personal hygiene standards. For example, the use of impervious and easily cleanable containers with lids for transporting equipment. If additional procedures are undertaken, such as hair removal using wax, then the operators should follow the relevant sections of these guidelines.