

ELECTROLYSIS

Electrolysis is a form of hair removal that involves inserting a sterile needle into a hair follicle. An electric current is sent through the needle to damage or destroy the root of the hair.

INFECTION RISKS

Treatment by electrolysis typically results in red, swollen and tender skin. There is a risk of skin scarring, including enlarged keloid scars. Proper insertion of an electrolysis needle typically does not puncture the skin. However, electrolysis equipment can become contaminated with bacteria, fungi and viral blood borne pathogens such as hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Infections can spread from:

- Contaminated and/or improperly reprocessed equipment
- Contaminated environment
- Client's own bacteria on the skin
- Unclean hands touching the treated area

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

Equipment:

All electrolysis needles are to be maintained as sterile until point of use and discarded in an approved sharps container after use.

- Electrolysis needles are not to be used beyond the date of expiry indicated by the manufacturer. Do not use needles if there are no expiry dates and lot numbers
- Lot numbers and expiry dates of the pre-packaged sterile equipment used on clients in the procedure are to be recorded and kept
- All cords, control panels or switches that cannot be easily or properly cleaned and disinfected between uses, and that may come into contact with a client's skin or be touched by an operator during the service, are to be covered with a single-use disposable cover. This cover must be discarded after use

Operational Requirements:

- Electrolysis is not to be performed on a client if nearby skin (within 15 cm/6 inches) has a rash or is inflamed or infected. If this is not possible, service must be delayed until the area has healed
- Skin that is visibly soiled must be cleaned with soap and water before starting the procedure

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- Operators are to apply skin antiseptic to the client’s skin in the area that is being treated
- Only topical local anesthetic approved for use by Health Canada is permitted. The site is to be cleaned with a suitable skin antiseptic before applying the anesthetic. Note: Injectable anesthetic is prohibited
- Skin antiseptics are to be stored and dispensed carefully in a way that prevents contamination of the antiseptic. These products are to be dispensed from a single-use swab packet or onto a single-use clean cotton swab or cotton ball, and applied onto the skin according to the manufacturer’s instructions
- Any ointment or astringent is applied to soothe the skin once the procedure is complete, must be dispensed in a manner that prevents the introduction and/or spread of disease-causing microorganisms
- Clients are to be provided with verbal and written aftercare information following the procedure, including a recommendation to see a doctor within 24 hours if any signs of infection develop

Reprocessing Classification

High-Level Disinfection	Intermediate-Level Disinfection	Low-Level Disinfection	Single-Use, Disposable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any equipment, instrument or item used to hold, manipulate or contact a sterile needle • Needle/probe holder or permanent attached pin device • Removable tip/cap (if reusable) • Tweezers used to expose ingrown hairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweezers used to remove hair from the hair follicle • Laser heads, tips and wands • Scissors used to cut hair • UV eye goggles for multiple-client use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment covered by single use covers • Electrolysis electrodes and sponge covers (if applicable) • Epilator foot-operating switches and cords • Epilator cord and control panel that comes in contact with the client’s skin or is handled by the worker † • Magnifying glass and arm/reusable magnifying goggles handles by worker • Service trays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrolysis needles* • Single-use PPE (gloves, masks, gowns, eye protection) • Roll-on wax cartridges • Single use removable tip/cap • Swab/applicators used to apply skin antiseptic and ointments • Paper (used to cover the client table) • Plastic sheaths (used to cover cords, control panels, etc.) • Electrolysis electrodes and sponge covers (if used) • Disposable razors • Waxing strips and applicator sticks

*These items are to be sterile before use (packaged sterile or sterilized on-site)

† If covered with a sheath/cover during use; if not, reprocess as a non-critical, intermediate-level disinfection item as long as it can be easily or adequately cleaned and disinfected between each use

SOURCES

1. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Guide to infection prevention and control in personal service settings. 3rd ed. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2019

This fact sheet was adapted with permission from CIPHI Ontario and is based on PSS best practice recommendations, current reprocessing standards and legislation. It is not an inclusive list of all requirements. Operators are responsible to ensure that all services are offered according to local requirements, best practices and legislation.