

# BODY PIERCING

**Body piercing involves the use of a single-use, sterile piercing needle, scalpel or dermal punch to create an artificial opening in the body, followed by insertion of sterile jewellery into the piercing site.**

## INFECTION RISKS

Microorganisms can enter the body at the piercing site and cause an infection. Infections can spread from:

- Contaminated or improperly reprocessed equipment
- Client's own bacteria on the skin and mucous membrane (e.g., genital piercings)
- Unclean hands touching the treated area

The result may be localized skin or tissue infections or more invasive infections.

## INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

### Equipment:

All jewellery for new piercings is to be sterile and maintained as sterile until the point of insertion. Jewellery may be purchased as individually pre-packaged, sterile, or purchased in bulk and sterilized on-site prior to use.

- Jewellery inserted into the body during a piercing procedure must be made from materials that are safe for the body and meet recognized safety standards. These are to be maintained as sterile until point of use
- Jewellery is to have a smooth finish and is to be free of any nicks, burrs or scratches
- All needles, dermal punches, closed-ended receiving tubes and single-use scalpel blades are to be maintained as sterile to point of use and discarded in an approved sharps container after use
- All reusable equipment/instruments/items are to be reprocessed (cleaned and disinfected) after use
- Items that are not able to be reprocessed are to be discarded after use
- Record the manufacturer, lot number and expiry date for pre-packaged sterile items. Do not use needles if there are no expiry dates and lot numbers
- Do not spray antiseptic solutions on sterile items before piercing
- Sterile items are not to be used once packaging is opened (i.e., if a single earring of a pair is used, the second earring is to be given to the client or discarded, and is not to be reused for piercing)

### Operational Requirements:

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- The service provider checks the client's skin for open cuts, wounds, and signs of infection. If found, service is refused
- Skin that is visibly soiled must be cleaned with soap and water before starting the procedure
- If a soap and water solution is used for lubrication, it is to be prepared just before use. Leftover solution is to be discarded after the procedure
- Apply skin antiseptic to clean the area of the client's skin that is being serviced
- Skin antiseptics are to be stored and dispensed carefully in a way that prevents contamination of the antiseptic
- Mark the area with an aseptic technique to prevent contamination of the marker
  - An antiseptic technique can be the use of a toothpick that has been stained with the marker or use a single-use marker, both of which are to be discarded after each use
  - If using a reusable marker, the area must be cleaned as in previous step, marked and allowed to dry, then cleaned again
- Antiseptics are not needed for piercings inside the mouth; ensure the client's mouth, including tongue, teeth and gums, is clean (e.g., clean with a single-use toothbrush)
- Before performing genital piercings, operators are to clean the procedure site with warm water and liquid soap
- If hair removal is required, use a single-use razor and discarded it into an approved sharps container
- Clients are to be provided with verbal and written aftercare information following the piercing, including a recommendation to see a doctor within 24 hours if signs of infection develop
- If you have a sterilizer or need more information, please refer to [Sterilization fact sheet](#)

## Reprocessing Classification

Sterilization	High-Level Disinfection	Intermediate-Level Disinfection	Low-Level Disinfection	Single-Use, Disposable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forceps and clamps</li> <li>• Jewellery used for initial piercing and jewellery purchased in bulk</li> <li>• Tapers</li> <li>• Open-ended receiving tubes</li> <li>• Ring-opening and ring-closing pliers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needle pushers</li> <li>• Scissors used to cut cannulas (insertion tubes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All calipers</li> <li>• Jewellery (when replacing piercing jewellery on completely healed piercings)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tables, chairs, beds</li> <li>• Rigid containers used to hold dirty equipment until reprocessing (at end of day)</li> <li>• Service trays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed-ended receiving tubes</li> <li>• Disposable clamps and forceps</li> <li>• Dermal punch*</li> <li>• Jewellery (stud earring, hoop, ball or screw)*</li> <li>• Marking pen or toothpick</li> <li>• Needles and cannulas*</li> <li>• Ointment applicators</li> <li>• Personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, gowns, eye protection)</li> <li>• Receiving cork</li> <li>• Swab used to apply skin antiseptic</li> </ul>

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

## 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.*