

LASER HAIR AND TATTOO REMOVAL

Lasers may be used to remove unwanted hair or tattoos. Depending on what they are used for, lasers vary in wavelength and energy penetration. Lasers remove hair by causing a thermal injury to hair follicles. They remove tattoos by breaking down tattoo ink particles in the skin.

INFECTION RISKS

Laser treatment may cause superficial burns or injury to skin at the site of the laser treatment or in the skin (epidermis) surrounding the treatment site. Microorganisms can enter the body at the procedure site and cause an infection. Infections can spread from:

- Contaminated and/or improperly reprocessed equipment
- Contaminated environment
- Client's own bacteria from different parts of the body
- Unclean hands touching the treated area

The result may be localized skin or tissue infections or more invasive infections. Additional risks include blistering of skin and localized allergic reactions.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

Equipment:

- All lasers used for hair or tattoo removal are to have an active Canadian Medical Device License (MDALL)
- All needles or lancets used to expose ingrown hairs are to be kept sterile until point of use, and discarded in an approved sharps container after each use
- All reusable equipment/instruments/items are to be reprocessed after use. Follow manufacturer's instructions for use (MIFU) and use an appropriate disinfectant
- Items that cannot be reprocessed are to be discarded after use

Operational Requirements:

- Operators are to provide clients with information on contraindications for laser treatment, including relevant medical and/or skin conditions, medications and other skin treatments
- Operators are to provide clients with relevant pre-treatment instructions
- The service provider checks the client's skin for open cuts, wounds, and signs of infection. If found, service is refused
- Operator is to perform hand hygiene before each procedure
- Skin that is visibly soiled must be cleaned with soap and water before starting each procedure

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- Operators are to apply skin antiseptic to the area of the client's skin 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.
- Antiseptic and marking agents are to be dispensed in a manner that prevents the introduction and/or spread of disease-causing microorganisms
- Operators are to provide clients with protective eyewear that is appropriate to the wavelength used and to the required optical density, and are to ensure this is worn by the client throughout the procedure
- Operators are to assess a client's skin and select the appropriate laser intensity and duration for treatment, taking into consideration factors such as a client's skin tone, type of hair and part of the body to be treated
- Any ointment or astringent that is applied to soothe the skin at the end of the treatment, 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
- Operators are to follow Health Canada's laser safety guidelines: [Laser Hair Removal-Safety Guidelines for Facility Owners and Operators](#)
- Operators are to keep records for each laser treatment, including the client's name, address, contact information, date and type of treatment provided

Reprocessing Classification

High-Level Disinfection	Intermediate-Level Disinfection	Low-Level Disinfection	Single-Use, Disposable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweezers used to expose ingrown hairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laser heads, tips and wands • Tweezers used to remove hair from the hair follicle • UV eye goggles for multiple client use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables, chairs, beds • Rigid containers used to hold dirty equipment until reprocessing (at end of day) • Service trays • Laser exterior power switches/touch screen/cables † 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lancets and needles used to expose ingrown hairs* • Disposable razors • Single-use applicators (i.e., to apply ultrasound gel) • Sheet to cover chairs

† If covered with a sheath or cover during use; if not, reprocess as a non-critical, intermediate-level disinfection item

* These items are to be sterile before 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
2. Government of Canada. Laser hair removal - safety guidelines for facility owners and operators [Internet]. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada; 2016 [cited 2018 May 18]. Available from: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/reports-publications/radiation/laser-hair-removal-safety-guidelines-facility-owners-operators-health-canada-2011.html

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.