

TATTOOING AND MICROPIGMENTATION

A tattoo is a form of body modification that involves the insertion of dyes or inks into the skin using a needle to create a permanent image or design. A tattoo can be placed on almost every part of the skin, although eyeball (scleral) tattoos are prohibited. Micropigmentation is a method of colouring the skin using a needle, designed to mimic the effect of makeup; can be referred as permanent or semi-permanent makeup.

INFECTION RISKS

Microorganisms can enter the tissue under the skin or mucous membrane at the tattoo site and cause an infection. 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 or ink
- Tap water used to dilute the ink
- Client's own bacteria on the skin
- Unclean hands touching the treated area

The result may be localized skin infections caused by bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* or *Mycobacterium spp.* or *Streptococcus spp.* Contaminated tattoo inks have been related to outbreaks of bacterial infection.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

Equipment:

- Single-use, disposable sterile needles or needle cartridges must be kept sterile until point of use and discarded in an approved sharps container immediately after use. 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
- Needle cartridges for needle styled pens must be equipped with a form of backflow prevention. Backflow preventers act as a barrier, preventing the spread of potentially harmful fluids and ensuring a safer micropigmentation environment for both the artist and the client
- Needles are not to be saved for reuse on the same client
- Approved sharps container must be stored at point of use
- All reusable equipment/instruments/items are to be reprocessed after each use
- Single-use ink caps (and when provided in bulk) are to be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected before use. Use an intermediate level disinfectant such as 70% isopropyl alcohol with a Natural Product Number (NPN) to immerse the ink caps for the required contact time as per the manufacturer's instructions for use)
- All supplies required for the tattoo/micropigmentation procedure are to be assembled and set-up immediately before the procedure

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- All reusable uncovered equipment and instruments such as clip cords, contact screws, service trays, squeeze bottles, electric devices, machines and controls must be cleaned and disinfected with an intermediate-level solution between clients. If covered by a single-use wrap, they may be cleaned and disinfected with a low-level disinfectant
- Materials used for dressings are to be kept in a cleanable rigid container with a tight-fitting lid to protect them from contamination
- Leftover inks, petroleum jelly and other items dispensed during the tattoo/micropigmentation procedure are to be discarded and are not to be reused

Operational Requirements:

- 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
- 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.
- Skin antiseptics are to be stored and dispensed carefully in a way that prevents contamination
- If hair removal is required, a single-use razor is to be used and discarded in an approved sharps container after use
- If a stencil transfer is required, skin is to be cleaned and an appropriate stencil transfer solution used (e.g., deodorant sticks are not to be used)
- If inks are diluted, sterile water is to be used. Tap water is not to be used
- Following completion of the procedure, operators are to cover the tattooed area (if applicable)
- Dressings must be single-use to cover the tattooed area (e.g., sterile gauze secured with hypoallergenic tape, or a clean dressing provided in a roll or individual package) and intended for tattoo aftercare
- Clients are 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
- If you have a sterilizer or need more information, please refer to [Sterilization fact sheet](#)

Reprocessing Classification

Sterilization	Low-Level Disinfection	Single-Use, Disposable
• *Reusable grips, tubes, and tips • *Reusable metal ink caps	• Tables, chairs, beds • Rigid containers used to hold dirty equipment until reprocessing (at end of day) • Service trays ‡ • Clip cord ‡ • Squeeze bottles ‡ • Contact screws • Scissors used to cut bandages • Tattoo/micropigmentation machine and controls ‡ • Tube clamp ‡	• Bandages to cover tattooed/micropigmented area • Elastic bands used on equipment/instruments • Lubricant applicators • Tattoo needles • Needle cartridges • Plastic covers • Razors • Single-use ink caps** • Stencils • Single-use rinse cups • Ointment applicators/swabs • Single-use personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, gowns, eye protection) • Water mixed with tattoo inks • Wipes, tissues, and dental bibs

*These items are to be sterile before use

** These items are to be intermediate-level disinfected before use

‡ If covered with a sheath/cover during use; low-level. 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