Body Modification

Body modification is the practice of physically altering the human body. Modifications may be temporary or permanent and can include branding, subdermal implants, tongue splitting, ear shaping, scarification and other procedures.

Infection Risks

Microorganisms can enter the body at the procedure site and cause an infection. Potential sources of these microorganisms include:

- Contaminated or improperly reprocessed equipment
- The 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 rejection of implanted jewellery or other foreign objects inserted under the skin.

Additional Considerations

Equipment:

- Implants (including implantable jewellery/beads, dermal anchors, silicone and magnetic implants) inserted into the body during a body modification procedure are to be made of a biocompatible material according to recognized standards (i.e., ASTM, ISO), and are to be maintained as sterile to point of use.
- All needles, dermal punches and single-use scalpel blades are to be maintained as sterile until point of use and discarded in an appropriate biohazard ("sharps") container after use.
- All reusable equipment/instruments/items are to be reprocessed after use.
- Items that are not able to be reprocessed are to be discarded after use
- Biomedical waste (including excised flesh) is to be disposed of in an approved biohazard bag or container according to provincial legislation, biomedical waste guidelines and any applicable municipal by-laws. Do not attempt to remove excised flesh from dermal punches or other similar equipment – discard the entire device in an approved biohazard container.
- Materials used for dressings are to be kept in a cleanable rigid container with a tight fitting lid in order to protect these from contamination.

Client Safety:

- Operators are not to pierce or modify a client's body if nearby skin (within 15 cm (six inches)) has a rash or is inflamed or infected; if this cannot be done, operators are to defer service until the area has healed.
- If a client's skin is visibly soiled, it is to be cleaned with soap and water before the procedure.

- If hair removal is required at the site to be modified, a single-use razor is to be used and discarded in an approved biohazard (sharps) container after use.
- If a topical local anesthetic is used, operators are to clean the procedure site with an approved skin antiseptic before applying the anesthetic. Injectable anaesthetics are not to be used.
- Before performing the procedure, operators are to apply skin antiseptic to the client's skin.
- If the procedure site is to be marked, operators are to allow the antiseptic to dry, mark the client's skin with a single-use marker or toothpick and allow the marking agent to dry before performing the procedure. Antiseptic and marking agents are to be dispensed aseptically.
- Following completion of the procedure, operators are to cover the modified area (if applicable) with a single-use, non-adhesive dressing that is intended to cover wounds.
- Dressings that are not intended to cover wounds (e.g., meat pads) are not to be used.
- Clients are to be provided with verbal and written aftercare information following the procedure, including a recommendation to see a family doctor within 24 hours if any signs of infection develop.

Reprocessing Classification

Critical ***Sterilization***	**Semi-critical** ***High-Level Disinfection***	**Non-critical** ***Low-Level Disinfection***	**Various classifications** ***Single-Use, Disposable***
• Dermal anchor tools • Dermal drivers/anchors • Forceps, retractors, clamps, skin elevators • Reusable scalpel handles • Strike branding metal strips	• Any equipment, instrument or item used to hold a sterile branding metal strip or electrocautery/ cautery tip	• Tables, chairs, beds • Rigid containers used to hold dirty equipment until reprocessing (at end of day) • Service trays	• Biopsy tools * • Disposable clamps and forceps • Dermal punch * • Marking pen or toothpick • Needles and cannulas * • Ointment applicators • Single-use personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, gowns, eye protection) • Scalpel blades and single-use scalpels with fixed blade* • Swab used to apply skin antiseptic • All implants (silicone, magnetic or other material)*

*These items are to be sterile prior to 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; 2018
2. Association of Professional Piercers. Minimum standards for jewelry for initial piercings [Internet]. Lawrence, KS: Association of Professional Piercers; 2017 [cited 2018 May 18]. Available from: www.safepiercing.org/jewelry_standards.php

This fact sheet 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.