

Body Piercing & Suspension

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. Suspension involves the insertion of sterile hooks into permanent or temporary body piercings or directly into the skin. The hooks are then used to hoist the person off the ground.

Infection Risks

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

- Contaminated or improperly reprocessed equipment (e.g., suspension hooks)
- The 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. Additionally, suspension may result in tearing of skin, leading to the creation of a larger wound.

Additional Considerations

Equipment:

- All piercing jewellery for new piercings is to be sterile and maintained as sterile until point of insertion. Jewellery may be purchased as individually pre-packaged, sterile, or purchased in bulk and sterilized on site.
- Jewellery inserted into the body during a piercing procedure is to be made of a biocompatible material according to recognized standards (i.e., ASTM, ISO). 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 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.

Client Safety:

- Operators are not to pierce a client's body if nearby skin (within 15 cm (6 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 pierced, a single-use razor is to be used and discarded in an approved biohazard (sharps) container after use.

- If a soap and water solution is used for lubrication this is to be prepared just before use and any leftover solution discarded following the procedure.
- If a topical local anesthetic is to be used, the piercing site is to be cleaned with an approved skin antiseptic before applying the anesthetic. Injectable anaesthetics are not to be used.
- For oral piercings, operators are to ensure the client's mouth (including tongue, teeth, and gums) is clean before performing the piercing (e.g., using a clean single-use toothbrush)
- Prior to performing genital piercings, operators are to clean the procedure site with warm water and a liquid soap.
- Before performing a piercing, operators are to apply skin antiseptic to the client's skin.
- If the piercing 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 piercing. Antiseptic and marking agents are to be dispensed aseptically.
- 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.

Reprocessing Classification

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

*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.