

Electrolysis

Electrolysis is a form of hair removal that involves inserting a sterile needle into a hair follicle. An electric current is sent through the needle to damage or destroy the root of the hair.

Infection Risks

Treatment by electrolysis typically results in red, swollen and tender skin. There is a risk of skin scarring, including enlarged keloid scars. Proper insertion of an electrolysis needle typically does not puncture the skin. However, electrolysis 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). Potential sources of these microorganisms include:

- Contaminated or improperly reprocessed equipment.
- The client's own bacteria on the skin.
- Contaminated environment or worker's hands.

Additional Considerations

Equipment:

- All electrolysis needles are to be maintained as sterile until point of use and discarded in an appropriate biohazard ("sharps") container after use.
- Electrolysis needles are not to be used beyond the date of expiry indicated by the manufacturer. If needles do not have an expiry date, these are not to be used if packaging integrity is compromised.
- All cords, control panels or switches that are not able to be easily or adequately cleaned and disinfected between uses, and that may come into contact with a client's skin or be touched by an operator during the service are to be covered with a single-use disposable cover.

Client Safety:

- Operators are not to perform treatment on 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 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. Antiseptic agents are to be dispensed aseptically.

- Following completion of the procedure, if ointment or astringent is applied to soothe the skin this must be dispensed aseptically.
- 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

Semi-critical	Non-critical	Non-critical	Various
High-Level Disinfection	Intermediate Level Disinfection	Low-Level Disinfection	Single-Use/Disposable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any equipment, instrument or item used to hold, manipulate or contact a sterile needle • Needle/probe holder or permanent attached pin device • Removable tip/cap (if reusable) • Tweezers used to expose ingrown hairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweezers used to remove hair from the hair follicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment covered by single use covers • Electrolysis electrodes and sponge covers (if applicable) • Epilator foot-operating switches and cords • Epilator cord and control panel that comes in contact with the client's skin or is handled by the worker. † • Magnifying glass and arm/reusable magnifying goggles handles by worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrolysis needles* • Single-use PPE (gloves, masks, gowns, eye protection) • Single use removable tip/cap • Swab/applicators used to apply skin antiseptic and ointments • Paper (used to cover the client table) • Plastic sheaths (used to cover cords, control panels etc.) • Electrolysis electrodes and sponge covers (if used)

*These items are to be sterile prior to use

† If covered with a sheath/cover during use; 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; 2018

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.