

Body art and tattooing businesses



Body art and tattooing businesses carry out procedures that penetrate the skin, so infection control practices need to be in place to prevent infections spreading from one person to another.

About this fact sheet

Body art and tattooing procedures can damage client's skin and there is a risk of infections spreading between clients. Poor cleaning and hygiene of equipment and surfaces can spread viral, bacterial or fungal infections from one client to another. This can result in diseases such as Hepatitis C and B, or staphylococcal, streptococcal and pseudomonas infections.

Businesses can find the rules for skin penetration procedures in the Public Health Regulation 2022 (the Regulation).

Equipment

- All equipment needs to be in good working order, be cleaned and dried after use and be kept in a clean and dry condition.
- All articles that penetrate the skin must be sterile before use.
- Sterilisation must be carried out in a steam-under-pressure bench top autoclave in line with AS/NZS 4815:2006 *Office-based health care facilities - Reprocessing of reusable medical and surgical instruments and equipment, and maintenance of the associated environment* (see fact sheet titled 'How to clean and sterilise reusable equipment and instruments').
- Equipment that is difficult to clean and sterilise should be single-use.
- Needles must be single-use and disposed of into an appropriate sharps container directly after use.
- Articles that are used in a skin penetration procedure but do not penetrate the skin, must be correctly cleaned and kept in a clean condition.
- Clean towels and linen must be used for each new client. Linen should be washed in detergent and hot water. If an impervious cover is used (such as plastic), it

must be cleaned and disinfected before it is used for each new client.

- The tattoo gun motor and clip cords must be cleaned then disinfected with 70% alcohol solution, or hospital grade disinfectant, and allowed to dry before being re-used.

Business hygiene

- The business is to be kept in a clean condition.
- Treatment areas such as benches must be cleaned between each client and/or a clean covering placed over the treatment surface.
- The business should have documented cleaning and maintenance procedures for the fixtures, fittings and equipment, and staff should be trained in these procedures.
- All waste should be tightly bagged and disposed of daily.
- Sterile packaging should be opened just prior to starting the treatment.
- Sterile parts of equipment that will penetrate the skin must not be touched with bare hands. If sterile equipment needs to be touched, a pre-packed sterile alcohol swab, a sterile dry swab, or sterile single-use gloves must be used.
- Use an aseptic non-touch technique to pour inks into sterilised containers or caps before working on a client. If inks need dilution, only use sterile water and dispose of any leftover inks.
- Equipment should be covered with single-use plastic to minimise the chance of contamination and disposed of immediately after the procedure.
- Only work on clients with skin that is clean and free from infection, sores, or wounds on or around the tattoo site.
- If the tattoo area needs to be shaved, use a new single-use safety razor for each client and dispose of it into the sharps container.
- The area of skin to be tattooed should be cleaned with a skin antiseptic that is approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

Personal hygiene for tattooists

- Tattooist and body art practitioners must wear a clean gown or apron and single-use gloves during the procedure.
- Cuts or wounds should be covered with sealed waterproof bandages.
- Hands should be washed:
 - before and after attending to a client
 - before and after a procedure
 - after exposure to a body substance
 - after touching a client's surroundings
 - after the removal of gloves
- See [Hand Hygiene Australia](#) for information on how to wash your hands.

Other requirements

- The business must be registered with the local council, meet all necessary planning and building standards, and have all necessary approvals before opening.
- The business should be designed and constructed so that it can be easily and correctly cleaned (see fact sheet titled 'Skin penetration business design and construction'). Contact the [local council](#) to ensure all local rules have been met.
- Sharps containers must meet AS/NZS 4261:1994 *Reusable containers for the collection of sharp items used in human and animal medical applications*, or AS 4031:1992 *Non-reusable containers for the collection of sharp medical items used in health care areas*.
- [Clinical waste](#) (that is, waste containing any blood or bodily fluids) must be disposed of into a clinical waste bin and then collected by a licensed waste contractor.
- Tattooists or other body art providers cannot, under any circumstances, supply a Schedule 2 product to their clients. Where required or desired, the client can purchase topical anaesthetic medicines (such as Lignocaine 2%, Emla cream and patches, Medijel, and Xylocaine jelly 2%) from a pharmacy and bring it to the business for their personal use only.
- Schedule 4 prescription only medicines (injectable anaesthetics) can only be supplied and labelled by a medical practitioner and can only be administered by a medical practitioner or a nurse practitioner.
- Request a product quality data sheet (certificates of analysis or equivalent) when purchasing inks to confirm that the product is safe and legal for use in NSW.
- Tattooists and body art practitioners should only carry out procedures that they have had appropriate training for and are within their skills to complete.

- People who have tattoos, including cosmetic tattoos, cannot donate blood for four months after getting the tattoo. For more information see the [Australian Red Cross Blood Service website](#).
- Tattoo businesses and tattoo artists must follow the requirements of the *Tattoo Parlour Act 2012* and be registered. For additional information please contact NSW Fair Trading, your local police or visit [NSW legislation](#).
- Tattoo and body art practitioners must comply with the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* in relation to the legal ages or consent needed for tattoos or piercings. For additional information please contact NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), your local police or visit [NSW legislation](#).
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) consider eyeball tattooing a high-risk procedure. It is prohibited under the [Public Health Act 2010](#) unless carried out by medical practitioner or other qualified person prescribed by the Regulation.

Fees and penalties

Further action may be taken if a business fails to comply with the Regulation. This may include:

- An Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order accompanied by an administration fee ranging from \$285 to \$295.
- Penalty notices ranging from \$110 to \$1100 for an individual and \$220 to \$2200 for a corporation. Maximum penalties are higher for prosecutions and may include a daily penalty.
- If a Prohibition order is issued, the business must display a copy at or near the entrance to the business where it is clearly visible to customers.
- Prohibition Order reinspections attract a fee of \$255 per hour with a minimum charge of 30 minutes and a maximum charge of 2 hours.
- A person who is not a medical practitioner and performs eyeball tattooing is subject to a maximum penalty of \$11,000 and/or 6 months imprisonment.

Further advice

- Contact your [local council](#).
- Contact your local [Public Health Unit](#) by calling 1300 066 055.

Further information

The following resources are also available to help skin penetration businesses and practitioners understand the requirements of the *Public Health Act 2010* and Public Health Regulation 2022. Visit our [Skin penetration resources](#) page on the NSW Health website:

Fact sheets

- Beauty, body art and skin penetration industries
- How to clean and sterilise reusable equipment and instruments
- Skin penetration business design and construction
- Eyeball tattooing

Poster

- Cleaning and sterilising reusable equipment and instruments

Video

- [NSW Health Tattoo industry infection control tutorial](#)

Standards

- [AS/NZS 4815:2006](#)