

Skin Penetration - Fact Sheet

"EAR PIERCING"

Introduction:

Ear piercing has specific tools designed to carry out an ear piercing procedure. A gun or needle can be used to pierce the ears, however a gun is more commonly used. Ear piercers must have adequate knowledge on how and where to pierce, infection control techniques, and minimum hygiene standards. The following recommendations are made to help achieve these standards.

Premises:

- All ear piercing premises must be registered with the local council. The register is to be made available for public viewing
- The premises must be kept in a clean and hygienic condition at all times
- A hand basin with hot and cold running water is required in the premises and is recommended to be in the treatment area
- Soap or other hand cleaning substance is required to be at the hand basin
- Paper towel or other single use hand drying equipment is required to be at the hand basin
- The construction of the premises should meet with local council requirements
- The finish on all surfaces within the piercing area should be made of materials that are easily cleaned
- Fittings in the piercing area such as benches should be cleaned between each client and/ or a clean covering placed over the treatment surface
- Adequate lighting is recommended

Personal Hygiene:

- Ear piercers must wash their hands before and after attending a client
- A clean gown or apron must be worn during a ear piercing procedure
- If a ear piercer has a cut or open wound on their hands or fingers especially, they must cover it with a waterproof dressing
- When a piercing is carried out, single use gloves must be worn

Equipment:

- Only an ear piercing gun or a needle should be used to pierce an ear. The gun is recommended for use on the lobe of the ear only
- The reusable ear piercing gun should not come in contact with the ear
- All equipment and/or jewellery used to penetrate the skin must be sterilised
- Most jewellery comes in pre-sterilised packaging and should be intact prior to the piercing

- The jewellery should not be handled when loading it into the gun, or inserting it into the opening when using a needle
- Disposable cartridges which sit in the gun are used to hold the jewellery in place for the piercing

Procedures:

- Although not a legal requirement a person under the age of 16 years should not receive an ear piercing unless parental or guardian approval is provided
- Ear piercers should have adequate knowledge on how and where to pierce. First aid knowledge is also recommended
- All necessary equipment should be set up just prior to starting the procedure
- The area to be pierced should be cleaned with a skin antiseptic
- No contact should occur between the gun and the ear
- Sterile packaging should only be opened when ready to perform the piercing
- Jewellery is normally pre-sterilised, jewellery should not be used that has been on display
- Contact must not be made with sterile jewellery, otherwise sterile gloves are to be worn
Single use gloves are not sterile unless specified

After Treatment:

- Single use gloves must be disposed immediately after the procedure
- The ear piercing gun is to be cleaned immediately after the procedure
- Cartridges that hold the jewellery in place during a piercing should be disposed immediately after piercing
- All waste should be bagged appropriately and disposed daily
- After care instructions should be provided to the client on cleaning the site and jewellery, infections and what to look for, and healing times
- There should be no exchange of jewellery once inserted into an opening

If a needle is used for an ear piercing:

- Single use sharps must be disposed of into a sharps container
- Re-useable sharps must be sterilised before reuse
- Details of sterilisation must be recorded

<p>For further information, or for other publications about skin penetration, contact your local council or public health unit.</p>
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For details on the legislative requirements for skin penetration procedures and best practice techniques refer to the 'Guidelines for Skin Penetration - 2001' and the 'Skin Penetration Code of Best Practice' respectively.

These publications are available from your local council, Public Health Units, the Better Health Centre on 9816 0452 or the NSW Health web site www.health.nsw.gov.au