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. Infections can spread from:

- 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.

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

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 until 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 approved 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 to protect them from contamination

Operational Requirements:

- Body modification is not to be performed on a client if nearby skin (within 15 cm/6 inches) has a rash or is inflamed or infected. Where this cannot be achieved, service must be delayed until the area has healed

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- Skin that is visibly soiled must be cleaned with soap and water prior to starting the procedure
- Operators are to apply skin antiseptic to the area of the client's skin that is being treated
- Only topical local anesthetic approved for use by Health Canada is permitted. The site is to be cleaned with a suitable skin antiseptic before applying the anesthetic. Note: Injectable anesthetic is prohibited
- Skin antiseptics are to be stored and dispensed carefully in a way that prevents contamination of the antiseptic. These products are to be dispensed from a single-use swab packet or onto a single-use clean cotton swab or cotton ball, and applied onto the skin according to the manufacturer's instructions
- If hair removal is required, a single-use razor is to be used and discarded in an approved sharps container
- Antiseptics are not needed for piercings inside the mouth; ensure the client's mouth, including tongue, teeth, and gums, is clean (e.g., clean with a single-use toothbrush)
- 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 in a manner that prevents the introduction and/or spread of disease-causing microorganisms
- Once the procedure is complete, operators are to cover the modified area (if applicable)
- Dressings must be single-use to cover modified area (e.g., sterile gauze secured with hypoallergenic tape, or a clean dressing provided in a roll or individual package) and intended for wound aftercare
- Clients are to be provided with verbal and written aftercare information following the procedure, including a recommendation to see a doctor within 24 hours if any signs of infection develop

Reprocessing Classification

Sterilization	High-Level Disinfection	Low-Level Disinfection	Single-Use, Disposable
• Dermal anchor tools • Dermal drivers/anchors • Forceps, retractors, clamps, skin elevators • Reusable scalpel handles	• 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* • Jewellery (stud earring, hoop, ball or screw)* • 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*

*These items are to be sterile before 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; 2019

This fact sheet was adapted with permission from CIPHI Ontario and 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.