

# Body Piercing



Commercial & Consumer Services  
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## Guidelines for Practitioners



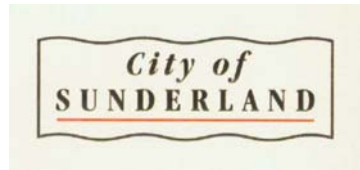
# A Guide for Body Piercing Practitioners

This booklet has been prepared jointly by the Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland Councils, to provide useful advice for anyone practising body piercing.

The advice has been jointly prepared so that you know the same standards will be applied wherever you trade within Tyne and Wear.

Body piercing is the practice of piercing parts of the human body into which jewellery is inserted. Parts of the body that may be pierced include the ears, nose, eyebrow, tongue, navel and genital organs.

Body piercing is potentially a hazardous practice if performed incorrectly. This booklet is aimed at body piercing practitioners to assist in reducing the risk of infection.



# Example of a Skin Piercing Consent Form

Clients name:	
Address:	
Telephone number:	
Date of birth:	
Means of age verification	
Details of parent/guardian if under 18 years	
Details of previous piercings (if any)	
Details of any relevant medical history	
Append copy of GP's authorisation	
Piercing to be carried out	
Details of any witness(es)	
Date of piercing	
Signature of client	
Signature of piercer	

## Sterilisation

Ensuring the sterility of all items coming into contact with the broken skin is one of the key elements for safe body piercing. This will include the piercing needle, the jewellery, any items used when performing the piercing or fitting the jewellery, and any containers in which they are kept prior to piercing.

Only new pre-sterilised, pre-packaged needles must be used, but other items including the body jewellery, must be sterilised before use.

Chemical disinfectants, ultraviolet light cabinets, dry heat ovens and boiling are not considered as suitable means of sterilisation. The only reliable method is to use an autoclave with an automatic sterilisation cycle. Most are suitable for solid unwrapped instruments/articles for immediate use. Vacuum autoclaves are available which are the only safe option if you wish to sterilise instruments or jewellery in pouches, hollow instruments or porous loads.

### Use of Autoclaves

All items must be thoroughly cleaned to remove organic matter and other substances which might prevent steam reaching the surface of the instrument, jewellery, etc. An ultrasonic cleaner is the most effective way of achieving this.

The manufacturer's advice on loading the autoclave and the volume and type of water must be followed.

Sterilised instruments, jewellery, etc should be placed in a sterilised container and covered. It is recommended that items not used within three hours be re-sterilised.

The manufacturer should specify appropriate daily/weekly user checks. These should be carried out and a record kept.

Indicator strips and autoclave tape indicate the temperature reached during a sterilising cycle but do not prove that it is working correctly.

A thorough examination of the autoclave should be carried out by a competent person at least annually. This may be combined with examination required under the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000.

## Body Piercing and the Law

You must ensure that any activities that you undertake as part of your business comply with current legislation. In general the following legislation is applicable to body piercing premises:

### Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982

Persons carrying out either ear piercing or tattooing must ensure that they and their premises are registered with the Local Authority to carry out these activities.

### Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

This covers the health and safety of persons at work, including the self-employed and persons affected by a work activity.

### Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999

COSHH requires that exposure to hazardous substances is controlled to protect employees or others who may be exposed.

### Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995

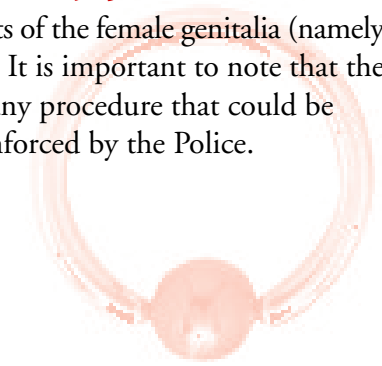
RIDDOR requires the reporting of some work-related accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences, which may involve employees or clients.

### Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

A careful examination (known as a risk assessment) should be undertaken of your work activities to ensure that you have taken enough precautions to prevent harm.

### The Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985

It is a criminal offence to pierce specific parts of the female genitalia (namely the labia majora, labia minora or clitoris). It is important to note that the Act does not allow females to consent to any procedure that could be defined as female circumcision. This is enforced by the Police.



## Age

There are no specific legal controls over the age at which body piercing can be offered, although body piercing is not recommended to persons under the age of 18. Every effort should be made to ensure that persons requesting piercing are over 18. Certain piercings on persons under age of 16 may be regarded as indecent assault. Piercers should make every effort to determine the true age of the client. It is not enough to simply ask their age.

An appropriate form of identification/consent should be produced, such as:

- Passport
- Driving licence (with photograph)
- Proof of age identity card
- Presence of a parent or guardian

Where possible only identification supported with a photograph should be accepted. The piercer should make a record of the form of identity seen.

## Records

Keeping records will assist in refuting any subsequent age related complaints.

Each client should be required to complete and sign a 'Skin piercing consent form' (There is an example of a suitable form at the end of this booklet, it may be reproduced and used by you).

Where the client is under the age of 18, the client's parent or legal guardian should also sign the consent form.

Records should be treated in confidence and retained for a minimum period of three years.

## Risks from Piercing

A notice should be prominently displayed on the premises advising potential clients of the risks associated with body piercing, including:

- Blood poisoning (Septicaemia)
- Localised severe swelling and trauma around the piercing site (especially the tongue)
- Localised infection (e.g. sepsis, urethritis, etc)
- Scarring
- Embedding of jewellery
- Rejection/migration of jewellery
- Allergic reaction to jewellery materials, piercing materials or chemical products
- Physical damage to teeth in the case of oral piercings
- Bleeding due to a blood vessel being pierced
- Blood borne viruses (e.g. Hepatitis B and C, HIV)
- Pain
- Loss of function or sensation due to nerve damage

## After-care

Clients should also be advised that blood donations should not be made for at least one year after piercing.

Piercings are susceptible to infection during the healing period. Appropriate aftercare is extremely important to promote healing and prevent infection. You should spend time discussing aftercare with each client and provide written instructions.

All clients should be given verbal and written information regarding Body Piercing After-care.

## Clients Medical History

The piercer must discuss the client's medical history and specifically ask whether the following conditions apply or have applied to the client:

- Diabetes
- HIV infection
- Eczema
- Impetigo
- Cellulitis
- Heart Disease
- Seizures (e.g. epilepsy)
- Hepatitis (B or C)
- Psoriasis
- Acne
- Fainting
- Bleeding disorders (including haemophilia or leukaemia)
- Allergic responses (e.g. adhesive plasters, jewellery, metals, anaesthetics etc.)
- Genital warts (if relevant to the requested piercing)
- Consumption of aspirin, ibuprofen or other anti-coagulant medication within the previous 24 hours
- Consumption of alcohol within the previous 24 hours

If any of these conditions exist or have occurred in the past, the client should be requested to produce written confirmation from his/her GP or Consultant acknowledging the condition and confirming that body piercing may be undertaken.

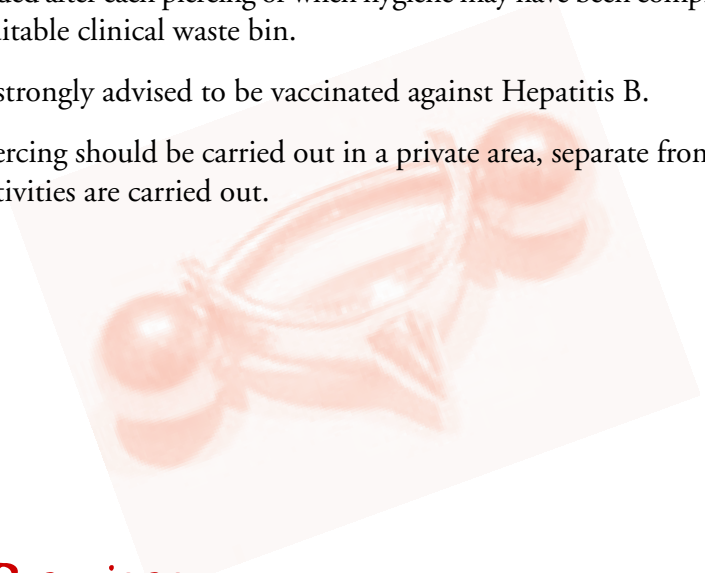
If the client is unable to provide this, or you have any doubts about their health background, the piercing should not be performed.

## The Piercer

Scrupulous attention to hygiene is essential to prevent the risk of contracting or transmitting any infection. Prior to piercing you should thoroughly wash nails, hands and elbows with soap (preferably using an antiseptic handwash solution), thoroughly dry (preferably using disposable paper towels) and wear single use disposable gloves for each client. Gloves should be discarded after each piercing or when hygiene may have been compromised into a suitable clinical waste bin.

You are strongly advised to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

Body piercing should be carried out in a private area, separate from where other activities are carried out.



## The Premises

The treatment room should be of adequate size for the purpose and be adequately ventilated. All internal walls, doors, windows, floors, ceilings, furniture and fittings should be kept in good repair and be capable of being effectively cleaned. It is recommended that a cleaning programme is devised and documented.

There should be adequate hand washing facilities suitably located. There should be a supply of hot and cold water, soap and disposable paper towels.

Smoking, eating and drinking in the treatment room are prohibited.

# The Piercing

A no touch technique (e.g. using forceps) should be used wherever practicable to reduce the risk of skin and soft tissue infections and to minimise the risk of injury to the practitioner.

When forceps are used to steady the skin, they must be sterilised before use. After use, they should be stored away from sterilised equipment and then sterilised before they are used again. Prolonged use of forceps should be avoided.

Piercing should not take place into a muscle, artery, vein or other potentially hazardous site.

The skin in the area of the piercing site must be appropriately cleaned before piercing, using 70% ethanol or isopropyl alcohol swabs (medi swabs) or 10% Providone iodine (e.g. Betadine). If the piercing site is to be marked, it should be done before skin cleaning, using a fine indelible pen (e.g. gentian violet).

The use of local surface anaesthetics is not recommended. If they are to be used, then only an appropriate surface local anaesthetic may be applied to the area to be pierced, using a clean disposable applicator, such as a sterile gauze. A sensitivity test should be carried out before piercing commences to check the effectiveness of the anaesthetic. Practitioners are advised against the use of ethyl chloride and/or Xylocaine as an anaesthetic.

All piercing needles must be new pre-packed, pre-sterilised needles. Hollow piercing needles should be a minimum of 1.55mm in diameter and no more than 2.5mm to reduce healing complications. The piercing needle should be held as far away as possible from the tip whilst affording adequate control of the needle.

Ear piercing guns are not recommended as they are inaccurate and non-sterile. Ear piercing guns should only be used on the ear lobes.

All jewellery should be '316' surgical steel, or 18 or 22 carat gold. It must be sterilised and kept in sterile conditions until used. All insertables should be inert, non-toxic and smooth. For nose piercing a back butterfly clip should not be used and a sleeper should be used instead.

For oral piercings (cheeks, tongue, lips) clients should gargle and rinse with antiseptic mouthwash prior to the piercing operation.

In the case of genital piercing, KY jelly should be used as a lubricant. Other soaps, creams and ointment should be avoided.

To minimise the risk of injury from fainting, the client should be in a reclined position on a couch that is easy to clean. This position is not appropriate for tongue piercing due to the risk of swallowing either the tongue or the jewellery.

If intimate piercing is to be carried out, a second member of staff should be present to offset any possible allegations of sexual harassment or assault.

