

## **Hygienic requirements for tattoo and piercing studios**

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Activities injuring the skin or mucus membrane are linked to an increased infection risk for diseases transferred by blood and serum. To avoid transferable diseases among humans, and to recognize infections early, and to avoid its spreading, such activities are regulated by the Infektionsschutzgesetz (IfSG.[1]), and the "Order to prevent transferable diseases" (Verordnung zur Verhütung übertragbarer Krankheiten). (**Hygiene Verordnung, [2]**).

This leaflet provides information, as to how you can implement the requirements of the IfSG and the Hygiene Verordnung while tattooing and piercing, and what you can do to minimize the health risks for you and your customers.

### **Hygienic equipment of your work space:**

The working area in which the tattooing or piercing takes place, should be physically (for example in a separate room) or at least functionally (for example by placing a partition wall) separated from other areas of the studio. The work space should only entail equipment and utensils needed for tattooing and piercing. The work space should be organized and free of dust and dirt.

In close proximity to the workspace, should be a wash basin. At which you must have a liquid soap dispenser and hand sanitizer, skin lotion, paper towels and a disposal bin for paper towels. Due to increased risk of contamination, bars of soap are not permitted. To avoid contamination of the work area due to water splatter, the hand washing station should keep a minimal distance of 1 meter or include a splatter guard.

All surfaces of the work area, such as the treatment table, counters, as well as floors and walls, should be smooth and be able to be washed and disinfected. The area for instruments to be used on the customer, should be covered with a disposable mat, which is to be disposed and replaced after each customer. The treatment table should also be covered with disposable material, which is to be replaced after each customer. The use of disposable paper covers is recommended.

A puncture safe waste bin for sharp and breakable items (needles, razorblades a.s.o) has to be in the working area. Eating, drinking, smoking and pets are not permitted in the immediate work area, to avoid possible contamination.

### **Personal Hygiene and hand disinfection:**

A good hand hygiene is the most important measurement to prevent the transfer of germs. This includes washing and disinfecting of hands. Before working and after using the bathroom, hands shall be washed thoroughly with soap. Additionally, hands need to be sanitized in the following situations:

- before tattooing
- after tattooing
- after any contact with blood or other bodily fluids
- after contact with contaminated surfaces or objects
- after disposing of surgical gloves (possible contamination due to punctured gloves)

The hand disinfection for tattooers and piercers is regulated by the law through the **Hygieneverordnung**. Therefore every tattooer and piercer has to be able to disinfect his/her hands correctly. Several videos demonstrating the correct way can be found on the Internet (for example <http://krankenhaushygiene.de/informationen/videos/>).

Fill the dry palm of your hand with 3-5 ml undiluted disinfection agent, then rub both hands thoroughly, especially the back of your hands and finger nails. The manufacturer's recommended exposure time is to be followed (generally 30 seconds). Hands are to be kept moist during this time.

The hand disinfection agent should be one that is proven to be effective. A list of such agents can be found at the Verbund für angewandte Hygiene (VAH, [www.vah-online.de](http://www.vah-online.de)). If an agent is listed here, it is commonly marked on the product itself, as well as mentioned in the user's information.

During tattooing, surgical gloves must be worn. These are to be replaced after each customer, as well as after becoming dirty or punctured.

#### **Cleaning of the skin area:**

The area to be pierced or tattooed has to be carefully shaved, cleaned and disinfected. For each customer, a new disposable razor must be used. The skin must be dry before disinfecting. Only disinfectant that have been approved may be used. The disinfectant must be applied undiluted and according to the manufacturer's recommendation, and may be sprayed on, or applied with a sterile pad. During the exposure time the affected area is to be kept moist. The cleaning of the skin during and after tattooing should be done with sterile water or other sterile liquids.

After tattooing or piercing, it is preferred to apply sterile bandaging. Since it is common to apply a healing ointment and saran wrap after tattooing, one should at least follow antiseptic procedures.

#### **Important:**

**Disinfecting agents are only to be used in their original packaging. The transfer into another container is not permitted.**

**Since it is used on humans, it is considered medication. The act of refilling a disinfectant, creates the chance of contamination with germs, as well as it being considered the production of medication under law, and you can be held liable for the product you are using.**

#### **Instruments:**

Objects penetrating skin or mucus membrane, and therefore have contact with the blood stream, have to be sterilized. This is also stated in the *Hygieneverordnung*, and executed by law. This includes objects and equipment such as Tattoo needles and cannulas used for piercing, as well as the jewelry to be used.

Since the correct cleaning, disinfecting and sterilization of reusable instruments is hard, expensive and time consuming, it is recommended to use disposable instruments.

### **Needles must be sterile and disposable !**

Instruments that do not penetrate, but potentially injure skin or membrane, or can be in contact with broken skin, are to be cleaned and disinfected. Such instruments are needle holder, handles, tweezers, pliers a.s.o.

The tattoo machine may not get in direct contact with skin or membrane but could be contaminated with blood and ink through the handling of the tattooer. An adequate cleaning of these machines is hard, if not impossible with most models. It is recommended that the machine is wiped down with disinfectant after each customer. To prevent contamination, the machine and its power cord should be wrapped in foil. After each use the foil is removed and the machine cleaned and wiped down with a disinfectant. The disinfection of the machine is still necessary, since foil is never 100% dense.

### **Storing of equipment:**

To avoid the contamination of the work area the instruments should be kept in a separate room or separate area. Cleaning areas should be physically separated from the working area. All surfaces should be smooth and easy to clean and disinfect and should always be done in the following order **Cleaning - Disinfection – Sterilization**.

#### **Cleaning:**

Cleaning can be manually performed with cleaning brushes or with an ultrasonic cleaner. When using an ultrasonic cleaner the instructions of the manufacturer are to be followed. The use of ultrasonic cleaner does not replace the disinfection! After each cleaning the instruments are to be rinsed with tap water and thoroughly dried.

Disinfection requires the cleaned instruments to be placed in a tub filled with disinfectant. It is important that the instruments are completely covered and won't have air getting to them. Jointed instruments are to be placed in an open position, and hollow instruments are to be flushed. The manufacturer's recommendations in regard to concentration, temperature and exposure, as well as in regards to the effect on the material have to be considered and followed. The exceeding of the recommended concentration or exposure time, can lead to the corrosion and shortening of its life time. The disinfectant must be replaced after each workday, or when it appears to be dirty. After the recommended exposure time, the instruments are to be rinsed with tap water and dried.

When choosing a disinfectant, ensure that it has been approved (for example VAH-List) and that it has been deemed effective against Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.

#### **Sterilization:**

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The best way to sterilize, is the steam sterilization 134° C. This sterilization process ensured a higher safety and better checking of the sterilization process. A "Dampkleinstereilisateur, Klasse N to B" with automated documentation of the sterilization parameters. Alternatively hot-air sterilization at 180 C can be used still now in tattoo and piercing studios. But this is not suitable for hollow instruments.

For the used instruments and equipment, an appropriate, approved, and validated sterilization process is to be used. **Validated processes are such where the effectiveness has been tested and confirmed**. The maintenance and testing of functionality of the machines should be done regularly and follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

Every sterilized item must be marked with sterilization date, content and batch number. Basic instructions regarding the handling of products which get into contact, or puncture with skin and membranes can be found on the homepage of the Robert-Koch-Institute. Detailed instructions in regard to the keeping of instruments, can also be found in the "Rahmenhygieneplan des Laenderarbeitskreises".

### **Cleaning and disinfection of surfaces.**

The working premises must be free of dust and dirt. Surfaces encountering costumers or used instruments have to be wiped with a disinfectant after each costumer. Surfaces like floors need to be cleaned daily or when they appear to be dirty, the work area wiped with disinfectant.

A suitable surface disinfectant should be used meeting the requirements (VAH list) and has been proven effective to Hep B, Hep C virus and HIV.

Opened disinfectants should be marked with opening and expiration date. Recommended is the use of disposable towel dispensers. In hard to reach areas, spray disinfectants may be used, otherwise wiping the objects, is more desirable. Solutions containing alcohol may be flammable and possibly harmful if inhaled.

### **Pigments:**

All inks and pigments should be stored in a closed drawer or cabinet. The expiration date after opening should not be surpassed. The needed inks must have decanted in single use container for each costumer and discarded after tattooing. Disposable containers need to be stored dust and contamination free.

### **Consultation of costumers:**

According to legal law, tattooing and piercing is considered a mayhem. Therefor every costumer must be informed before tattooing or piercing, about procedure, possible risks and correct aftercare.

Under age costumers are required to provide a parental consent.

### **Vaccination:**

Since there is an increased risk for Hepatitis B infection, due to possible contact with blood and body fluids. The Robert Koch Institute (**Krinko**) recommends for people working in profession with risk, a Hep B vaccination.

### **Quality Management:**

We recommended a hygiene standard in writing to avoid infections. These should cover the following areas:

- Personal hygiene
- General hygiene measures
- Reprocessing of instruments

- Disposal

Please update as needed.