

How should I use an autoclave?

An autoclave will only operate effectively if it is used correctly, checked for effectiveness regularly and subject to a suitable maintenance and inspection program.

When using the autoclave it is important to follow some basic procedures:

- Only trained and authorised staff should use the equipment.
- Any equipment being placed in the autoclave must be pre-cleaned thoroughly.
- Equipment must be used immediately or kept sterile and used after a maximum of three hours.
- Each day checks must be made to ensure manufacturer's temperature, pressure and holding times are complied with. Chemical indicator strips that are placed in the steriliser are a simple method that can be used, however they are not a substitute for routine periodic testing and maintenance of the steriliser.

How do I maintain an autoclave?

Autoclaves must be adequately maintained if they are to work effectively. They must be serviced according to the manufacturer's instructions and they must be inspected and certificated by a competent person. Your autoclave manufacturer or your insurance company should be able to recommend a suitable person to carry out this inspection.



Where can I get further information?

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Health and Safety Team at Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE, Tel: 01362 656870 or e-mail: healthandsafety@breckland.gov.uk.

Cosmetic Piercing

A Guide to Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilisation



Introduction

Any activity that involves piercing the skin creates a risk of infection and the transmission of blood-borne viruses such as HIV and/or Hepatitis B or C.

Instruments that come into contact with the skin **must** be sterilised. It is also important that work surfaces and other equipment will need to be thoroughly cleaned and where necessary disinfected.

What is the difference between cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation?

Cleaning

This is a process that will remove contaminants such as dust, dirt and general soiling and kill some micro-organisms but not all of them. Cleaning with hot water and detergent is important as, if skin piercing objects are not cleaned thoroughly blood and other substances can coagulate and will firmly adhere to surfaces, this means that micro-organisms may then survive disinfection or sterilisation processes.



Disinfection

Using a disinfectant such as bleach does not necessarily kill all micro-organisms. Some bacteria, viruses, fungi and spores may survive. It is not as effective as sterilisation and its success is very dependent on the surface being cleaned along with the time the surface is exposed to the chemical. Disinfection alone must not be used for equipment used in the piercing procedure.

Please note: Chemicals used in the piercing environment **do not** sterilise equipment.

Sterilisation

This is the only procedure that will kill all micro-organisms, provided that correct equipment and procedures are used. The use of an autoclave is the most reliable means of sterilisation and a vacuum autoclave should be used in body piercing and tattooing premises.

How can I ensure effective cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation of my equipment and premises?

Cleaning

All working areas should be cleaned with hot water and suitable detergent. Used piercing equipment must be thoroughly cleaned and then rinsed in cool water.

Ultra-sonic cleaners can assist the cleaning process prior to sterilisation but piercing equipment needs to be thoroughly cleaned prior to the use of the ultra-sonic cleaners.

Disinfection

Sodium Hypochlorite either in liquid or tablet form, e.g. bleach is one of the most effective disinfectants for piercing premises. However, it is important with any disinfectant that you:

- Dilute and use according to manufacturer's instructions; observe chemical contact time.
- Ensure solutions are freshly made up each day as their power reduces with time.
- Store them safely.
- Wear appropriate protective equipment, e.g. gloves.
- Check that they are in date.

Hazard data sheets are available from your supplier and should be kept on your premises preferably near where the chemical is being stored.

Gluta-aldehyde and Cidez are no longer suitable to use, as they are toxic and an irritant to the body.

Sterilisation

This is necessary for all instruments and equipment used in skin piercing procedures. The most reliable form is moist heat usually at a temperature between 121°C and 134°C as used in an autoclave. This method uses steam under pressure to destroy micro-organisms. The procedure relies on three stages:

- Pre-sterilisation cleaning.
- Autoclaving – see guidelines below.
- Aseptic storage – keeping objects sterile until used.

Vacuum autoclaves are often used where it is necessary to sterilise hollow items such as tubes and grips e.g. in tattooing and body piercing premises. Vacuum autoclaves should be used in these premises.

However, for most other piercing premises a bench top steam steriliser will be the best system to use.

Packaged items should only be used in a steriliser that has a pre-sterilisation vacuum stage and a post sterilisation drying stage.

