

Table 7: Detailed Infection Prevention and Control Procedures for Ear Lobe Piercing

Adapted from *Infection Prevention and Control Practices for Personal Services: Tattooing, Ear/Body piercing, and Electrolysis*. Health Canada, July 1999.

		Equipment/Supplies	Use During Skin Piercing	Procedures for Infection Prevention
1.	Client preparation	Single-use towel	A towel may be used to drape the piercing site.	The towel should be used to protect the client from any soiling during the procedure.
2.	Skin preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Skin antiseptic, (e.g. 70% alcohol or an iodine, such as betadine). The antiseptic selected must be appropriate for the piercing site and must be used according to the manufacturer's instructions. ➤ Clean swabs (e.g. gauze or cotton balls) 	Swabs moistened with an antiseptic are used to disinfect the skin piercing sites.	The skin antiseptic shall be applied with a moist single-use swab, using a circular motion. If alcohol is used, it should be stored in a pump pack which is used to moisten the swab with alcohol. Other antiseptics, such as betadine, may be poured into a disposable cup. The ear lobe must first be cleaned with an approved skin antiseptic, then marked with a (iodine) felt tip/marketing pen prior to piercing. After one minute, once the pen mark has dried, the site is to be cleaned again with the approved skin antiseptic just prior to piercing.
3.	Jewellery	Studs are the common form		Jewellery used for piercing must be sterile. Jewellery must be smooth to avoid skin damage, which delays healing and increases the risk of infection.
4.	Ear piercing instrument	Single-use packaged stud and butterfly clasp Head of piercing instrument. A single-use removable cartridge is strongly recommended	The stud is pierced through the lobe of the ear by the practitioner through activation of the spring mechanism in the instrument or by squeezing the instrument. The butterfly clasp at the back of the ear lobe holds the stud in place. The piercing instrument is used to hold the sterile stud. Blood may be splattered onto the instrument as the stud is pierced through ear tissue.	Studs must be sterile and pre-packaged. The removable cartridge must be discarded after single-use. The piercing instrument surface must be cleaned then soaked in an intermediate to high level disinfectant, (e.g. 70% alcohol) between clients.

		Equipment/Supplies	Use During Skin Piercing	Procedures for Infection Prevention
5.	Client aftercare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Soap ➤ Alcohol-based hand rubs ➤ Antibacterial ointment 	<p>Clients shall be instructed to perform hand hygiene before washing the pierced area with soap on a daily basis and to rotate the jewellery to help with the cleaning process. Ointment may be applied to the freshly pierced skin area and the jewellery should be rotated.</p>	<p>The skin piercing site shall be cleaned to promote healing and to prevent the chance of infection. Oral and written instructions for aftercare shall be provided to the client. If ointment is used, single-use ointment applications are recommended in a manner to prevent contamination. Ointment acts as a lubricant and may reduce the chance of infection. If ointment is taken from a bulk container, it must be removed with a single-use spatula or tongue depressor.</p>
6.	Practitioner supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hand washing soap ➤ Alcohol-based hand rubs ➤ Hand lotion ➤ Single-use gloves 	<p>Soap is used to remove microorganisms on the practitioner's hands.</p> <p>Alcohol-based hand rubs containing between 60-90% alcohol can be used to perform hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled.</p> <p>Lotion is used to keep the skin in good condition as frequent hand washing may dry out the skin.</p> <p>Single-use gloves must be used as a protective barrier on hands after cleaning of the skin with an antiseptic and before opening the package that contains the sterile jewellery. If the gloves are contaminated, they must be removed, hand hygiene must be performed and a new pair put on.</p>	<p>Single-use gloves must be worn to reduce the number of organisms on the hands and offer some protection from sharps injuries. Gloves must be used to touch only the objects needed to do the procedure. Hand hygiene must be performed before gloves are applied and after glove removal.</p>

For more information, call

**Brockville 613-345-5685
Smiths Falls 613-283-2740**

**HealthACTION Line
at 1-800-660-5853**

**visit our website at
www.healthunit.org/infectious**