Delivering a Healthy WA

Skin Penetration

Henna Tattooing

Environmental Health Guide

Henna tattooing is a form of temporary body decoration similar in appearance to a tattoo. In recent years the popularity of henna tattoos has increased due to the fast, easy, painless and temporary application of the tattoo. The tattoos generally last from twelve days to a couple of months and do not involve the direct penetration of the skin.

In Western Australia there are currently no provisions under the *Health Act 1911* requiring henna tattoo businesses to be registered by Local Government.

However, there are possible risks for the transmission of infection via application of henna tattoos, and operators are encouraged to take standard precautions.

Recommended standard precautions:

- An operator who is performing a henna tattoo should have access to hand washing facilities.
- An operator should wash hands with soap and running water (or an alcohol based hand cleansing lotion) before and after applying a henna tattoo on a client.
- A client's skin should be clean and free of infection prior to applying a henna tattoo. Prior to applying a henna tattoo the area of the skin where the tattoo will be located needs to be wiped over with a sterile disposable swab containing a disinfecting solution. The skin should then be allowed to dry for 30 – 60 seconds.

Approved skin preparation disinfecting solutions include;

a) 70% W/W isopropyl alcohol
b) 80% V/V ethyl alcohol;
c) 60% V/V isopropyl alcohol;
d) Alcoholic (isopropyl and ethyl formulations of 0.5 – 4% W/V chlorhexidine); or
e) 10% W/V aqueous or alcoholic providine iodine (1% W/V available iodine).

- Henna stencils should be disposed of into a waste receptacle after each use on a client.
- Enough henna should be dispensed for each client into a single use container. All excess henna should then be disposed of after each client. This will prevent cross contamination of the main stock of henna with microorganisms from the clients skin.
- Operators are encouraged to advise those people with sensitive skin to avoid henna tattoos.

It is also recommended that operators obtain a copy of the Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures which is available from the Environmental Health Directorate from the Department of Health of Western Australia on (08) 9388 4999.

Environmental Health Directorate
Department of Health
PO Box 8172
PERTH BUSINESS CENTRE WA 6849

Telephone: (08) 9388 4999
Facsimile: (08) 9388 4955

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