

Estheticians work in close contact with their clients, often performing services that have the potential to spread HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

However, proper cleaning of tools and effective personal protection can

eliminate the risk of transmission. These protective measures ensure the safety of both the client and the esthetician,

thereby ensuring professional standards that benefit the esthetics profession as a whole.

The ideas expressed in this brochure are based on the information that is currently available at the time of printing. There is always new information emerging about these viruses based on current research and experience. Therefore the standards in general practice in the community are not always up to date. They simply do not change quickly enough. This is especially true with HCV.

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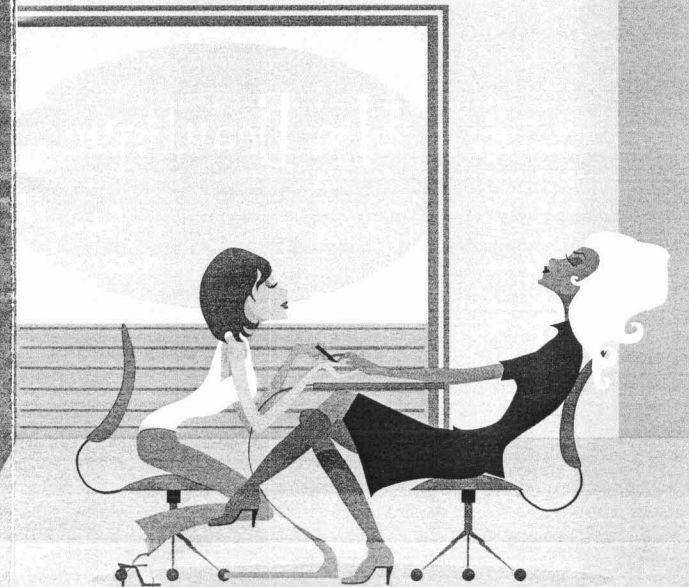
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* the cutting edge *

esthetics & viruses



Personal & Client Protection

HIV: The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is found in blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk. Although it can be present in tears and saliva, its concentrations in these fluids are not sufficient for transmission. HIV can be transmitted through unprotected sex, through injection drug use with a shared needle, through piercing and tattoo needles, and from an infected mother to her child (either at birth or through breast milk). HIV cannot survive more than a few minutes outside a host body. This virus attacks the immune system, making it difficult for the body to fight off infections. Although there are certain drugs that can slow the progress of the virus towards full-blown AIDS, there is no known vaccination or cure for HIV.

Hepatitis C: Hepatitis C (HCV) is found in the blood but not in saliva, semen or vaginal fluids. Even microscopic amounts of blood can carry Hepatitis C. It can spread when people share instruments or tools such as: IV needles, piercing and tattoo needles, toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers, emery boards, tweezers, brushes or cuticle cutters/pushers. It can also spread from sharing jewelry worn in piercings, such as earrings or studs, and through sexual activity involving blood. The virus can survive for up to two weeks outside of a host body. Hep C affects the liver, and can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. There is no vaccination or cure for Hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B: Hepatitis B (HBV) is like HIV because it is found in blood, semen and vaginal fluids. It can be transmitted through unprotected sex, injection drug use with a shared needle, through piercing and tattoo needles and from an infected mother to her child. Hep B is also like Hepatitis C because it can survive for more than a week in even microscopic amounts of on blood on earrings, razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers, tweezers and cuticle cutters/pushers or other dry surfaces. Hepatitis B attacks the liver and can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. There is an effective vaccine for Hepatitis B that significantly reduces the risk of HBV infection.

A few simple precautions can prevent the spread of all three viruses.

Hand washing: Estheticians should wash their hands frequently with warm water and soap. This kills any viruses present on the skin and thereby prevents them from entering the esthetician or his/her client's bloodstream. It is especially important to wash one's hands before and after contact with clients, before eating or handling sterile equipment, before putting on and after removing gloves, and after using the washroom or blowing one's nose. When in doubt, it is best to wash one's hands.

Wearing gloves: Surgical latex gloves should be worn whenever the esthetician faces the potential of coming into contact with a client's blood or body fluids (e.g., during piercing procedures). Gloves provide a barrier to prevent the transmission of viruses and bacteria. People with allergies to latex should talk to a dermatologist to find out other options, such as polyurethane gloves. Used gloves should be thrown away after use on each client – the same pair of gloves should never be used on two different clients.

Sterilizing equipment: Because the Hepatitis B and C viruses can survive outside of the body, it is best to use certain types of equipment only once. For example, use sterile, disposable piercing needles, rather than re-usable needles. For equipment that can't be discarded after each use, such as razors, nail clippers, emery boards, tweezers, or cuticle cutters/pushers, it is important to sterilize each instrument after each use. An autoclave, which uses a combination of steam, heat and pressure to sterilize equipment, is the best option. A dry heat sterilizer is

also an effective means of sterilizing instruments. Instruments should always be rinsed, washed with lukewarm water and detergent and dried prior to sterilization. This procedure removes blood, dirt and dust that can cling to the instrument's surface and reduce the effectiveness of sterilization. Once instruments have been sterilized, they should be stored in a clean, dry place where they cannot be contaminated.

Maintaining clean work areas: Work areas should always be kept clean, and, to prevent cross-contamination, should be separated from the area where sterile equipment is stored. Once the client is ready, the esthetician should wash his/her hands and put on gloves, then set out all the necessary sterile equipment and accessories. After completing the procedure, the esthetician should remove used equipment, clean up his/her work area and make sure there are no blood spills. If there is blood, even small amounts, on floors or counters, contaminated areas should be wiped up with disposable towels or cotton swabs and washed with disinfectant or bleach and water (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) for 10 minutes. Because bleach can expire, it is important to use only fresh bleach for cleaning. Always wear gloves when cleaning up blood spills.

Disposing of wastes: It is important to dispose of waste materials in a way that prevents used items from spreading viruses and bacteria. Sharp objects such as needles should be disposed of in a puncture-resistant sharps container. Gloves, cotton swabs or towels used to clean up blood or fluids should be disposed of in a plastic bag, and that bag should be tied up before being thrown into regular trash receptacles.

Other Tips

Vaccinations: While there are no vaccinations for HIV or Hepatitis C, there are effective vaccinations against Hepatitis A and B. Estheticians should be vaccinated against these viruses and should maintain accurate records of all vaccinations they receive. To be effective, two separate vaccinations are required for Hepatitis A and three for

Hepatitis B. It is important to complete all of the vaccinations.

Cuts: Minor cuts should be allowed to bleed for a minute or two. This is the body's way of cleaning the cut. After bleeding for a short time, the cut should be rinsed under cold water and then bandaged.