

Laser Hair & Tattoo Removal

Lasers may be used to remove unwanted hair or tattoos. Depending on their intended use, lasers vary in wavelength and energy penetration. Laser hair removal is achieved by causing a thermal injury to hair follicles, while laser tattoo removal is achieved by using a laser to breakdown tattoo ink particles in the skin.

Infection Risks

Laser treatment may cause superficial burns or injury to skin at the site of the laser treatment or in epidermis surrounding the treatment site. Microorganisms can enter the body at the procedure site and cause an infection. Potential sources of these microorganisms include:

- Contaminated or improperly reprocessed equipment
- The client's own bacteria from different parts of the body
- Unclean hands touching the treated area.

The result may be localized skin or tissue infections or more invasive infections. Additional risks include blistering of skin and localized allergic reactions.

Additional Considerations

Equipment:

- All lasers used for hair or tattoo removal are to have an active Canadian medical device license.
- All needles or lancets used to expose ingrown hairs are to be maintained as sterile until point of use and discarded in an appropriate biohazard (sharps) container after use.
- All reusable equipment/instruments/items are to be reprocessed after use.
- Items that are not able to be reprocessed are to be discarded after use

Client Safety:

- Operators are to provide clients with information on contraindications for laser treatment, including relevant medical and/or skin conditions, medications and other skin treatments.
- Operators are to provide clients with relevant pre-treatment instructions.
- Operators are not to perform laser treatment on a client's body if nearby skin (within 15 cm (6 inches)) has a rash or is inflamed or infected; if this cannot be done, operators are to defer service until the area has healed.
- If a client's skin is visibly soiled, it is to be cleaned with soap and water before the procedure.
- If a topical local anesthetic is used, operators are to clean the procedure site with an approved skin antiseptic before applying the anesthetic. Injectable anaesthetics are not to be used.

- Before performing the procedure, operators are to apply skin antiseptic to the client's skin. Antiseptic and marking agents are to be dispensed aseptically.
- Operators are to provide clients with protective eyewear that is appropriate to the wavelength used and to the required optical density, and are to ensure this is worn throughout the procedure.
- Operators are to assess a client's skin and select the appropriate laser intensity and duration for treatment, taking into consideration factors such as a client's skin tone, type of hair and part of the body to be treated.
- Following completion of the procedure, if ointment or astringent is applied to soothe the skin this must be dispensed aseptically.
- Clients are to be provided with verbal and written aftercare information following the procedure, including a recommendation to see a family doctor within 24 hours if any signs of infection develop.
- Operators are to follow Health Canada's laser safety guidelines: [Laser Hair Removal-Safety Guidelines for Facility Owners and Operators](#).
- Operators are to retain records for each laser treatment, including the client's name, address, contact information, date and type of treatment provided.

Reprocessing Classification

Semi-Critical <i>High-Level Disinfection</i>	Non-critical <i>Intermediate-Level Disinfection</i>	Non-critical <i>Low-Level Disinfection</i>	Various classifications <i>Single-Use, Disposable</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweezers used to expose ingrown hairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laser heads, tips and wands • Tweezers used to remove hair from the hair follicle • UV eye goggles for multiple client use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables, chairs, beds • Rigid containers used to hold dirty equipment until reprocessing (at end of day) • Service trays • Laser exterior power switches/touch screen/cables † 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lancets and needles used to expose ingrown hairs*

† If covered with a sheath or cover during use; if not, reprocess as a non-critical, intermediate-level disinfection item

* These items are to be sterile prior to use

Sources

1. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). [Guide to infection prevention and control in personal service settings](#). 3rd ed. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2018
2. Government of Canada. Laser hair removal - safety guidelines for facility owners and operators [Internet]. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada; 2016 [cited 2018 May 18]. Available from: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/reports-publications/radiation/laser-hair-removal-safety-guidelines-facility-owners-operators-health-canada-2011.html

This fact sheet is based on PSS best practice recommendations, current reprocessing standards and legislation. It is not an inclusive list of all requirements. Operators are responsible to ensure that all services are offered according to local requirements, best practices and legislation.