## **HEALTH AND SAFETY IN HAIRDRESSERS**

#### **Dermatitis**

Dermatitis occurs when skin comes into contact with substances that irritate it, for example hair dyes and bleaches. It can also be caused by 'wet work' which is when skin is in contact with water for more than two hours a day. Many trainee or junior staff who spend most of their day washing hair are affected by this. Symptoms of dermatitis include dryness, itching and redness which can develop into flaking, cracking, blistering and swollen skin. It can be extremely painful and affect your career as well as your home life. Around 50% of hairdressers experience dermatitis at some point in their career.

Fortunately dermatitis is preventable by taking a few simple precautions:

# Step 1. Wear disposable non-latex gloves when rinsing, shampooing, colouring, bleaching, etc.

- Choose a longer-length glove folding the cuff back to stop water running down the arms
- Pick a smooth glove to stop hair snagging
- Have different sized gloves available and ensure a good fit
- Show staff how to remove gloves by peeling them down from the cuff, while avoiding touching skin with the outside of the used gloves
- Make sure gloves are worn for cleaning spills and equipment
- Rotate jobs to minimise exposure for each member of staff

## Step 2. Dry your hands thoroughly with a soft cotton or paper towel.

- Provide soft cotton or paper towels for drying hands
- Tell staff about the importance of thorough hand drying as part of their skin care regime. Don't forget to dry under rings and jewellery.

# Step 3. Moisturise after washing your hands, as well as at the start and end of each day.

- Provide moisturising cream in a dispenser or give each of your staff their own supply
- Choose fragrance-free and nut-oil free moisturisers, as some people can be sensitive to perfumes and nuts
- Encourage staff to make sure all areas are covered it's easy to miss fingertips, finger webs, and wrists

#### Step 4. Change gloves between clients.

- Make sure staff don't re-use disposable gloves the skin can be contaminated if you try to put them back on
- Advise your staff to change gloves between clients this gives the skin a chance to 'air'

#### Step 5. Check skin regularly for early signs of dermatitis.

Get into the habit of checking your own skin and reminding staff to check theirs

For further information see the Health and Safety Executive's website at <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing">http://www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing</a>. A booklet on 'Dermatitis and Glove Use for Hairdressers' can also be downloaded for free from the HABIA website at www.habia.org

#### **Electrical Safety**

All portable appliances such as hairdryers and straighteners must be maintained in a safe

condition to prevent employees receiving an electric shock. Plugs and cables can become damaged with continuous use or if they become trapped under chairs or are dropped. Formal visual inspections are recommended every six months. However simple visual checks of plugs and cables will pick up many obvious defects. Checks should look for:

- Damage to the plug such as cracked plastic casing or bent pins
- Cables becoming loose from the appliance or plug eg. coloured wires showing where cable enters the plug
- Damage to the cable sheath along its length eg. exposed wire or bad kinks
- Evidence of water getting into the appliances
- Evidence of overheating, burn marks or discolouration

Appliances must be taken out of use where exposed wires are found. The fixed electrical installation (everything from the distribution board to the sockets) must also be maintained and should be checked by an electrician every five years.

### Slips & trips

Any water, cut hair or products on floors can make them slippery for staff and customers. Trailing cables from appliances, computers and phones can cause a trip hazard. The salon should be kept tidy and cut hair swept up promptly. Any water or spillages must be cleaned up immediately. You may wish to provide mats at the entrance to the shop or around wash basins. Floors should be mopped at the end of the day when customers have left and staff do not have to walk across wet floors.

### Hygiene of equipment and razors/clippers

Equipment such as razors and clippers may accidentally cut or graze customers or staff and draw blood. If they are not properly cleaned there is a risk of blood borne infection being passed from one person to another. All equipment must be properly cleaned with barbicide or sterilising solution after use. Solutions should be made up according to the instructions and changed every day to ensure they are still effective.

## **Customer health issues**

Customers may be allergic to the products you use such as colourants or perming solution, or to latex. You must always check with customers if they have any known allergies or damage to their scalp. Some products require a patch test 48 hours prior to treatment to check for reactions. Products must always be made up to the correct concentrations following the instructions, and left on for the correct time. Proper neutralising is also important. Some customers are allergic to latex which is another reason non-latex gloves must be used.

#### Risk assessments

If you have five or more employees you must have written risk assessments. A risk assessment identifies what the hazards are in your business, such as those in this factsheet, and identifies what control measures you will put in place to ensure no-one is harmed. For example dermatitis is a potential problem, and you can control it using gloves as explained in this factsheet.