

INFECTION CONTROL IN BARBER SHOPS

Revised 08/08/2010

The germs and how they are transmitted

Germs of concern are bacteria, fungi and viruses. The most important are:

- **Staphylococcus aureus** (or “staph”), and particularly the methicillin-resistant staphylococci aureus (MRSA). One third of the people carry staphylococci in their nose and skin. Two percent are carriers of MRSA. MRSA is the more aggressive staph. Both staph and MRSA cause skin infections that can be minor (folliculitis) or very severe (furuncles, carbuncles, abscesses). They may even cause severe pneumonia and septicemia (blood poisoning). They are transmitted by simple contact; the hand of the source person picks up the bacteria and deposits it on the skin of the target person (direct contact), or deposits it on an object that will later be touched by the target person (indirect contact).



-There are many other bacteria, fungi and viruses that can be transmitted in the same way. MRSA is the one most common and severe.



- **Blood borne pathogens:** There are many germs that can be transmitted by blood. Those of particular concern are the viruses of **hepatitis B, hepatitis C** and **HIV**. Hepatitis B is the easiest to transmit and HIV the most difficult to transmit. The most common way of transmission is contact with the blood of the infected person. The transmission to the target (person who will become infected) does not occur through intact skin. It occurs through cuts in the skin, damaged skin as in eczema and other sickness of the skin, the eye, internal parts of the mouth and nose. The usual mode of transmission in a barber shop is through razor blades that picked up the viruses on an infected patient, were not properly disinfected or disposed of and when re-used, cut the skin of the recipient. Less than one percent of the population may be a carrier (for each infection).

- **Germs in droplets:** When people speak, sing, cough, sneeze or spit, they put out a large cloud of droplets. The size of the droplet varies from one tenth to three times the diameter of a hair. The large droplets fall quickly but the smaller ones float in the air for minutes to hours. Many respiratory diseases (due to bacteria or viruses) are transmitted through droplets: chickenpox, mumps, pneumonias, tuberculosis and whooping cough, for example. The people who put out the most droplets are those who cough or sneeze.



- **Sick people are often the source of germs.** If the barber or a customer has a skin infection, (usually skin infections are red, hot, swollen and painful), or a respiratory disease, (cough, sneezes), they should stay away from the barber shop. If it is possible to cover the skin infection or to wear a simple mask, (it does not have to be a N95 mask), then it would be acceptable to proceed. But, remember that not all people that could be infectious appear to be sick. Many people are carriers of staph, MRSA, hepatitis B, C or HIV. Therefore you should take standard precautions against direct, indirect or blood borne transmission with everybody at all times.

- **Germ in the environment:** Many germs will persist for a long time in the environment. Depending on the germ, they may survive for hours or even days on a counter, comb, clippers, towels and cloths. Germs can also survive in soapy water or on soap. Soap does not kill germs; it just makes it easier to wash them away. To prevent indirect contact it is important to use an effective disinfectant on the counter and on all instruments used. Any material (towel, tissue...) used on the skin of one customer should not be used on another customer without having been disinfected or washed. The best way is to use disposable material whenever feasible.



- **Clean hands** are key to the protection of the barber and the customer. A barber's hands may become contaminated from touching the skin of customers or objects that were soiled. Hands may transmit germs from the customer to the barber or, from the barber to the customer. A barber's contaminated hands may deposit germs on a razor or clipper and then to the customer. As a precaution, wash hands before and after the working day, before eating or drinking and after visiting the toilet. Hand sanitizers can be substituted for hand washing.

- **Use an approved disinfectant:** The disinfectant used should be effective and not damage the object to be disinfected. Disinfectants work best on clean surfaces. Counters, chairs or objects (clippers, razors...) that are caked with dust, dirt or hair will not be so easily disinfected, unless they are cleaned prior to disinfection. Take some appropriate precautions when cleaning. If cleaning requires heavy brushing, it is best to use gloves and even a mask and do this in a utility area away from the workstations and the customers.



- **Cleaning and disinfection:** Wipe counters in the morning and chairs between customers. Hair clippings on the floor must be swept up after each client and shall be disposed of in a covered container. Use appropriate disinfectants for the surface or the instrument. Sanitization shall be performed using EPA registered hospital grade disinfectant or a sterilization device which uses heat or steam in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Be very careful when cleaning any surface or instruments that were contaminated with blood.

- **Do not share** anything between customers without cleaning, disinfection or disposal of single use. Do not use the same towel with another customer. Place a sanitary paper strip or clean towel completely around the neck of each customer before an apron or any other protective device is fastened around the neck. Clean and disinfect hairbrushes, combs and other implements between customers. Combs and brushes must be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water after each patron has been served and then immersed in a solution of one part water to 10 parts of sodium hypochlorite (bleach), EPA hospital grade disinfectant or some equally efficient disinfectant used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Shampoo boards and bowls must be kept clean at all times.



- **If it cannot be cleaned and disinfected, do not use:** Do not use shaving brushes and shaving mugs unless properly sterilized between customer use. Do not use solid alum or a common styptic pencil to stop the flow of blood; use alum only in liquid or powder form. Do not use brush neck dusters, powder puffs, make-up brushes and sponges unless they are single-use disposable implements or properly sterilized between customer use.

- **Space helps prevent transmission:** Particularly to prevent droplet transmission, it is useful to have workstations well spaced out. Large droplets do not travel much further than 3 feet. Separating chairs would help reduce the transmission from one customer to another. When using hair dryers, avoid pointing the flow of air towards you or another customer.



- **Sharps disposal:** Sharps such as razor blades, must be handled with caution. Even if a razor blade does not show any visible evidence of blood, it should be considered as potentially contaminated with blood. When handling a sharp, NEVER put a finger in front of the sharp or pointed side of the object. Dispose of the sharp in a sharp-proof container (solid plastic or metal container). Do not dispose of sharps in a plastic garbage sack without it first being in a container.

- **Keep stored items away from contamination:** Keep towels, linen, brushes, combs and other implements not currently in use, in enclosed areas to avoid placing them at risk of being contaminated. Towels used for patrons shall be clean and freshly laundered in a disinfecting detergent and kept in a closed cabinet designated for clean towels only. Soiled towels should be kept in a container.



- **Disinfectant Type of Use Comments:** Exposure time of greater than 10 minutes to any of the chemicals listed below is required.



- ultra violet lights
- household laundry bleach (100 ppm available chlorine)
- ethyl or isopropyl alcohol (70-90 percent)
- sodium hypochlorite (100 ppm available chlorine)
- phenolic germicidal detergent solution (1 percent aqueous solution of concentrate)
- quaternary ammonium germicidal detergent solution (2 percent aqueous solution of concentrate)
- barbicide (or its equivalent).

Electric Clipper Sanitizing Techniques

- Detachable Head-Type (Sanitary Design): 1-Detach blades, 2-Clean thoroughly, 3-Immerse in effective sanitizer for required time.

- Non-Detachable Head-Type: 1- Place covered shallow glass jar at work shelf opposite every barber chair, 2- After use, brush out excess hair and grease; wipe cutting blades clean, 3-Immerse blade in combination lubricant-sanitizer, run clipper while immersed for 10 seconds, 4-Remove clipper and allow blades to drain for 10 minutes on a clean towel or tissue, preferably in a cabinet reserved for tools already sanitized and ready for use. Wipe blades clean with a fresh disposable tissue.

