



Unit 1

The Workplace Environment

Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this Unit the candidate will be able to:

- Understand the importance of hygiene at the workplace.
- Promote healthy practices at the workplace.
- Take effective measures to prevent cross-infection and secondary infection.

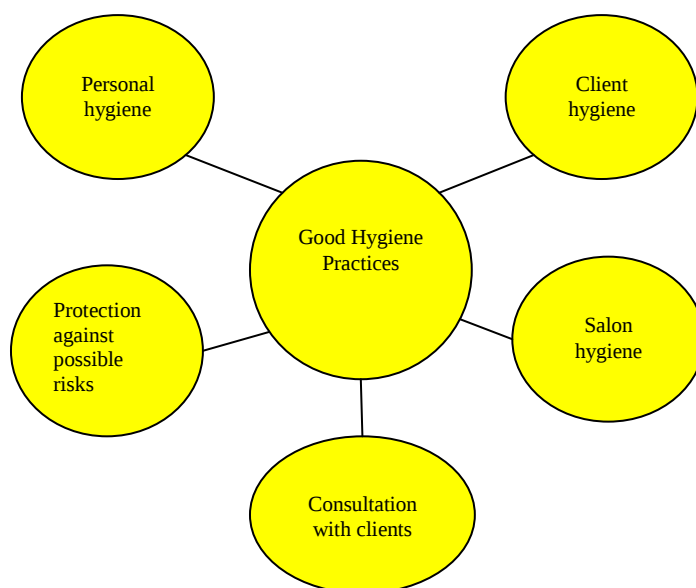
BEAUTY THERAPY

The Beauty Industry has never been taken as seriously as it is today. Excellent training and high standards have improved its reputation. As a result, the Beauty Industry is now considered as providing an important service to the public. Numerous comprehensive skills and knowledge are required by this industry. Beauty therapists use their expertise and knowledge to provide therapeutic treatments to their clients that aim to enhance the condition of their body and face, to make them feel de-stressed and relaxed, and therefore improving their confidence levels.

Nevertheless, the Beauty Industry could suffer immensely if beauty therapists do not continuously maintain the highest possible standards in safety, hygiene and health. Apart from complying with the Health and Safety at Work Act, every salon must define and follow its own regulations and guidelines to keep the staff and clients safe. These procedures are known as Codes of Practice or Workplace Policies.

Hygiene is defined as the science of maintaining health and healthy practices. Hygiene is as essential in a salon as health and safety. Therefore, professional therapists would describe hygiene as good practices for maintaining:

- Their personal health
- Their clients' health
- Their colleagues' health



Effective Hygiene Practice

Personal Appearance and Hygiene

Maintaining high standards for personal hygiene is extremely important for beauty therapists, as they work in close proximity with several people during a regular work day. Dirt, bacteria and sweat are reasons for body odours. Body cleanliness can be achieved by bathing daily, and by using deodorants and antiperspirants. Using mouth sprays, brushing teeth regularly and using breath fresheners and mints are highly recommended to avoid passing bad breath to clients.

A beauty therapist working in a salon is expected to maintain good personal appearance, as each beautician is their own most effective advertisement. To stay healthy and fit, a well-balanced diet that includes foods from each group (carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals and vitamins) is extremely important. Sufficient sleep and consistent, regular exercise also make significant contributions towards maintaining good health.

Hair is another very vital part of a well-groomed individual's appearance. A beauty therapist's hair should always be clean and look very tidy. While working in the salon, if the beautician's hair falls below the shoulders, it must always be tied up very neatly so that it does not fall on the client while they work. Short hair must appear to be in good condition and well-styled.

Washing hands each time a beauty therapist begins to work on a new client is a good strategy, as is using hand cream frequently to keep the skin soft and protected. Finger nails must be kept fairly short and clean because germs and dirt tend to build up beneath long nails, which are likely to spread infections.

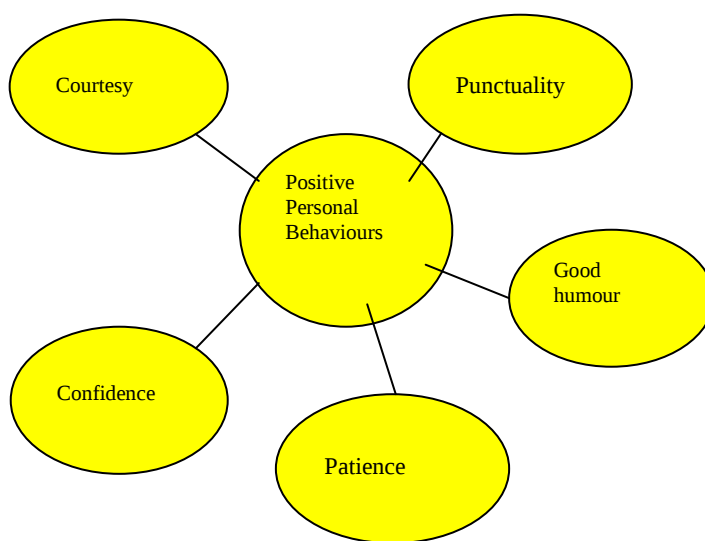
Shoes should be selected very wisely as they must fit appropriately and meet specific safety and health requirements. As beauticians spend most of their work day in the salon standing up, their shoes need to be comfortable.



Clothing is another very significant element because it must be appropriate for the work environment. It is advisable for beauty therapists to wear salon tunics for an enhanced professional appearance, and to protect their usual clothing from becoming dirty.

A positive attitude is one of the most imperative qualities of a professional beauty therapist. A caring and smiling expression while working with a client pleases them, while a sour expression or other negative behaviour causes them distress. Apart from clients, co-workers and other staff members also get disturbed by any negative attitudes. The entire work environment then becomes unpleasant. Additionally, any kind of negative publicity is very bad for every business. In a salon, every client and beauty therapist is surrounded by the numerous mirrors and every facial expression or body language can be seen by several people simultaneously. Therefore, it is important to be very aware.

Another golden rule for people working at a salon is to speak very clearly and always be courteous and respectful towards everyone. Positive personal behaviour has the capacity to make significant contributions towards a beauty therapist's popularity with the staff and clients.



Positive Personal Behaviours.



Personal Presentation	Yes / No
Are your teeth brushed and your breath fresh?	
Are you freshly bathed or showered?	
Are you wearing the correct uniform?	
Are you wearing proper jewellery?	
Is your uniform clean?	
Is your hair neat and tied up?	
Are your nails clean?	
Are you wearing proper and clean footwear?	
Are you wearing appropriate make up?	

Personal Appearance Checklist.

Workplace Hygiene

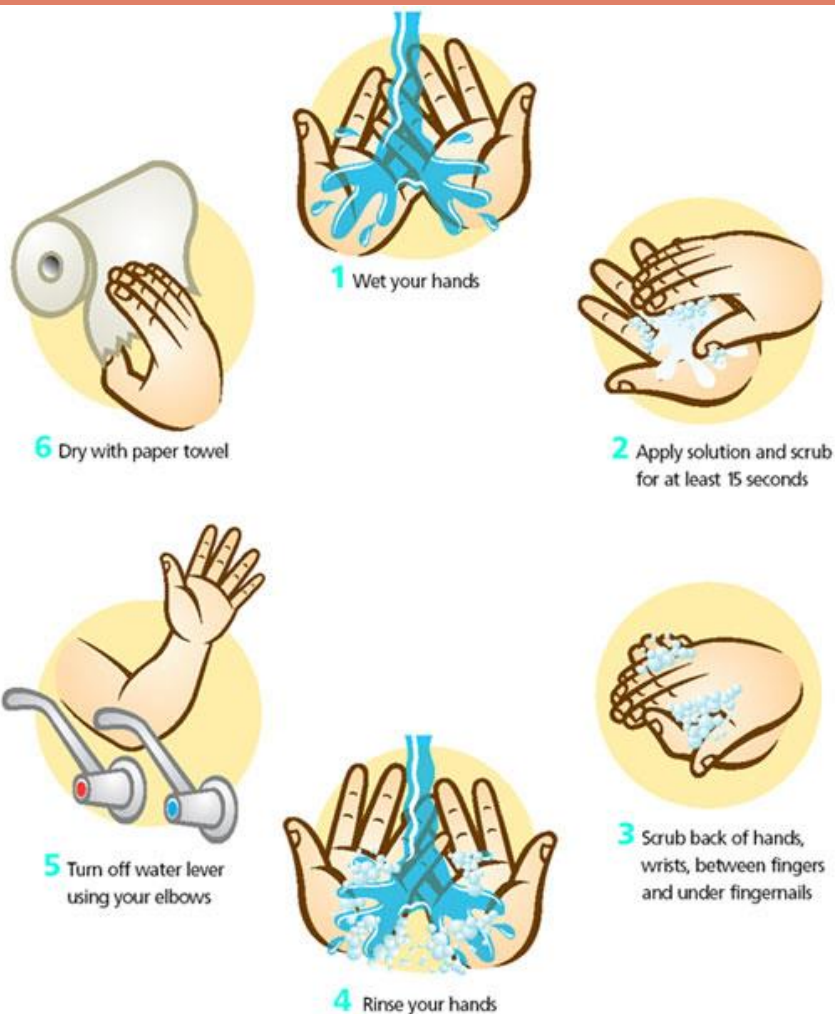
Maintaining hygiene effectively in the salon is essential for prevention of secondary and cross infection. To ensure that the work environment at a salon is clean and free of germs, three strategies are quite effective:

1. Sanitation

Sanitation means washing and cleaning to remove dust; however, it does not get rid of all existing microorganisms such as viruses, bacteria, protozoa and fungi.

It is advisable to use liquid soap to sanitise hands and paper towel to dry them.

Sanitising all equipment and tools before sterilising them is essential.



2. Disinfecting

For objects that cannot be sterilised, the best strategy is to place them in any chemical disinfectant solution, such as glutaraldehyde or quaternary ammonium compounds. Wipe all surfaces, trolleys and equipment with a good disinfectant solution to reduce bacteria and germs to a level which is not very harmful for health.



3. Sterilisation

Sterilisation is a method of cleaning that kills bacteria and germs using various methods such as dry heat sterilisation, heat sterilisation, steam sterilisation and ultraviolet sterilisation.

- a. **Dry heat sterilisation** takes place in a small oven called a hot air oven with temperatures up to 150–180°C.
- b. **Heat sterilisation** takes place in a small unit called a bead steriliser, which is heated electrically. The unit comprises glass beads that transfer heat to the items placed in direct contact with the beads. Heat sterilisation is appropriate for tools such as scissors and tweezers.



- c. Steam sterilisation takes place in a device called an autoclave, which looks like a pressure cooker. When water is boiled within the autoclave, the temperature ranges between 121–134°C.



- d. Ultraviolet sterilisation occurs inside an ultraviolet cabinet in which a quartz mercury vapour lamp is used to destroy micro-organisms.

Although all these methods are quite useful, they are not 100% effective in reaching every surface of each tool. Objects like make-up brushes and sponges are quite hard to sterilise completely. Since most salons do not have sterilising equipment, such as a hot air oven or an autoclave, such items can be cleaned by washing them with hot soapy water. However, using disposable sponges and brushes is the best alternative in the absence of appropriate sterilising equipment.



Common Rules for Hygiene in a Salon



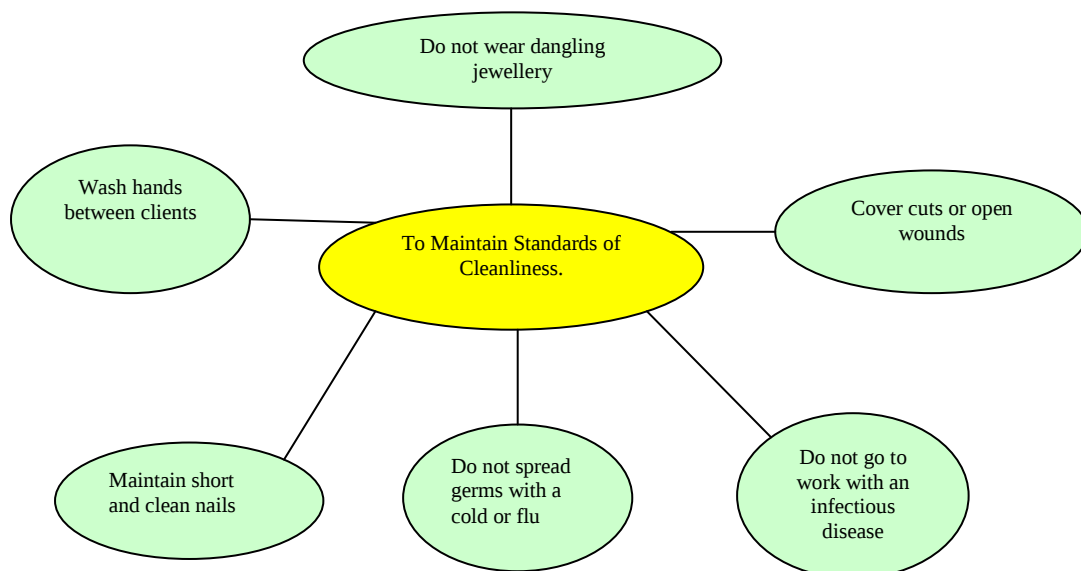
Rules for Personal Hygiene

- Before and after each treatment, washing hands with a detergent that contains chlorhexidine is essential.
- Wear disposable gloves while performing treatments that may have the possibility of exchanging body fluids, such as waxing.
- Any existing cuts on the skin must be covered with water-proof plaster.
- Nails must be kept short and clean always.
- Washing hands after every visit to the washroom is vital.
- It is advisable to wear protective clothing to appear professional as well as for protection.
- Broken or cracked equipment should not be used.
- All guidelines provided in the personal appearance and hygiene section should be followed.



Remember

Every workplace has its own regulations and procedures called organisational requirements which must be followed by the staff.



Rules for Hygiene of the Salon

- The treatment room should be kept clean by wiping all surfaces such as couches, trolleys, counters, stools, floors and work surfaces.
- All equipment must be sanitised as thoroughly as possible.
- Towels and couch rolls may be used to create barriers between the clients and blankets.
- Clean towels and gowns must be used for every client.
- Any tissues used to tuck in the headband must be disposed of immediately after use.
- Clients with contagious skin diseases or other contra-indications should never be treated.
- All dirty laundry must be placed aside in covered containers.
- Equipment or tools that have not been sterilised or sanitised effectively should never be used.
- Eating and drinking in the treatment sections of the salon is not allowed.
- All make-up pencils must be sharpened again after every use. Eye shadows and powder blushers must be scraped into a palette before being applied to a client to avoid contamination.



- Disposable spatulas must be used for waxing, while oils and creams must be decanted with a spatula into a smaller container. Left over products must be thrown away instead of being poured back into original containers.
- Disposable brushes should be used to apply makeup to avoid cross infections from the lips and eyes.

Activity

Visit various beauty salons in your locality and compare their hygiene standards. Speak to other people and discuss their experiences at different salons.

Client Hygiene

- It is important to carry out comprehensive consultations with clients to discover any possible contra-indications.
- Always carry out a physical examination of the area that is to be treated for infections.
- Getting the client to sign a declaration stating that the medical information provided by them is accurate and up-to-date is important so that possible repercussions can be avoided later.
- If unrecognised issues are present, treatment should not be carried out.
- The beauty therapist should provide the client every possible protection.

Remember

During a consultation, it is essential to check if the client is aware of any skin disorder or disease they suffer from.

- Standard commercial timings for various treatments.
- Standard abbreviated forms for recording treatments.



Treatment	Abbreviation	Time allowed
Cleansing and make-up	C/M/up	45 mins
Shaping eyebrows	E/B reshape or trim	15 mins
Manicure	Man	45 mins
Nail art minutes per nail	N/art	5-10 mins
Pedicure	Ped	45 mins
Waxing: half	½ leg wax	30 mins
Three-quarters leg	¾ leg wax	30-40 mins
Full leg	full leg wax	50 mins
Underarm wax	U/arm wax	15 mins
Arm wax	F/arm wax	30 mins
Eyebrow wax	E/B wax	15 mins
Facial min	F	60 mins
False lashes	F/lash	20 mins

These treatment timings do not include time required for consultation and preparation for treatment.

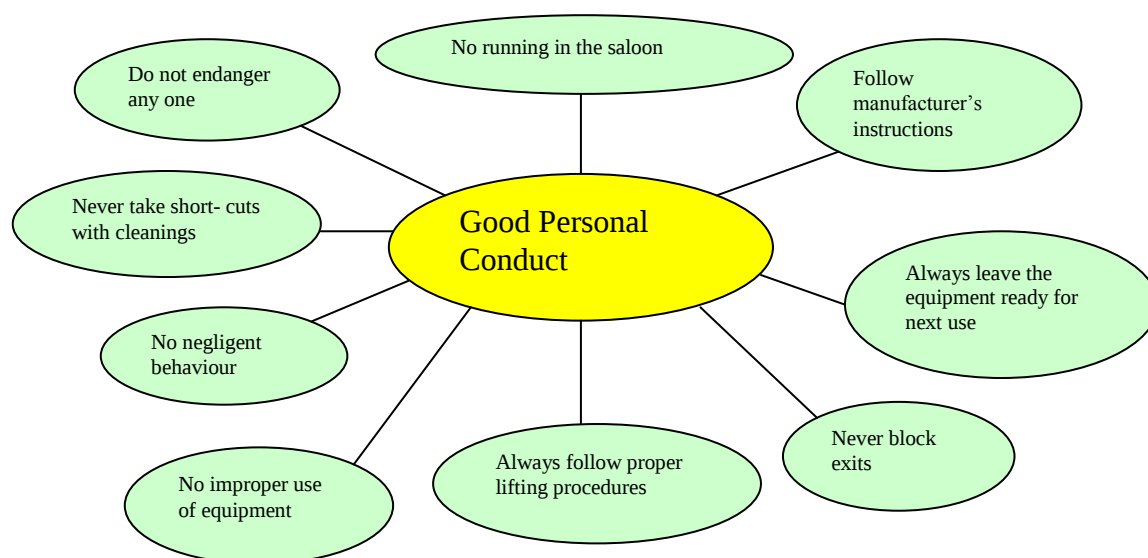
Rules for Health and Safety

The employer is responsible for providing a safe environment to their staff. Additionally, it is the duty of the employees to abide by workplace policies so that the salon remains a safe and healthy place to work. With relevance to the Health and Safety at Work Act, beauty therapists have the following duties:

- Ensure that they do not do anything to place themselves or others at any kind of risk, such as running or jumping in the salon.
- Ensure that they do not place themselves or others in any kind of danger due to lack of response to a risky situation. Noticing occurrences such as water spillage on the floor should not be ignored. Instead, water should be mopped up at once to avoid anyone slipping and getting hurt.
- Ensure the use of appropriate precautions and procedures that improve work safety, such as using gloves.



- Report anything which may cause accidents in the salon to the employer promptly.
- Every salon must have health and safety policies that ensure the safety of clients and staff.



A Safe Workplace

- The employer is responsible for providing a safe work environment to the staff.
- The salon's entrance and exit should allow safe and clear access.
- Sufficient space should be present between work stations for staff members to work comfortably, without bumping into each other.
- The salon's temperature must be between 18–20°C to be comfortable to work in.
- The salon should have sufficient light.
- The salon must be appropriately ventilated.
- The salon must also have an appropriate toilet for the staff.

Safe Equipment and Tools

- The employer is responsible for ensuring that all tools and equipment used by the staff in the salon are safe and well-constructed.
- Before using electrical equipment, staff members must make sure that the wires are not split open or frayed.



- All hot items must be cooled down appropriately before being put away.
- All plugs and plug sockets should be safe and not be broken or damaged.
- Staff members should only use equipment that they have been trained to use.
- Electrical and non-electrical equipment must be checked thoroughly before being used.

Dealing with Harmful Substances

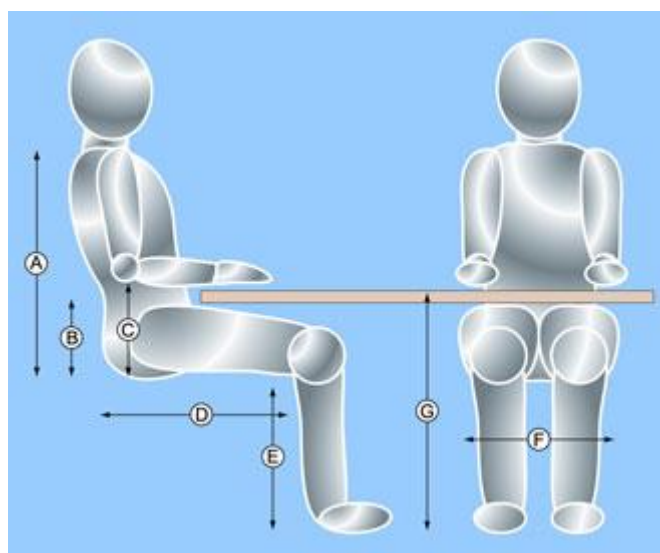
Chemicals that are used in a salon can generally be harmful if they are not used correctly. To enable beauty therapists to work safely, they must use protective clothes including the following:

- Gloves protect hands from all kinds of chemicals. Wearing gloves while performing services such as waxing can prevent cross infections.
- Aprons protect clothing from spillages and chemicals.

Beauty therapists must receive suitable training to enable them to handle chemicals safely.

The Right Posture

Beauty therapists need to be careful about the way they sit while working at the reception or while carrying out treatments. Having a couch or chair at the right height for each individual is very important because poor posture can tire them very quickly and lead to long-term problems.

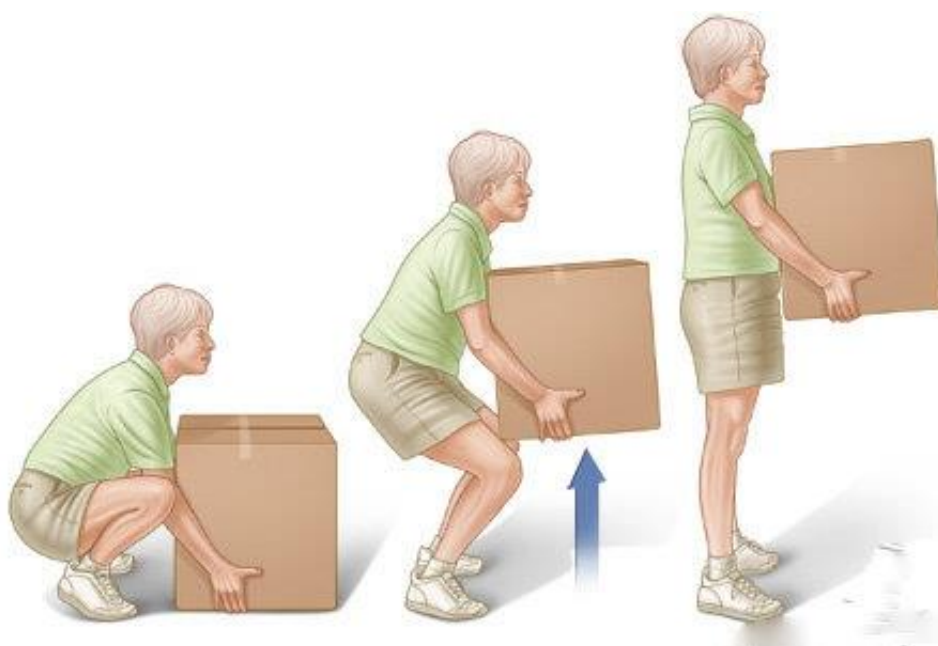




Lift Objects Carefully

Lifting heavy objects while in an inappropriate posture can cause back aches, which can make it quite difficult to work in a salon. By following some simple rules to lift objects carefully, such issues can be avoided.

- Instead of bending the back, bend knees.
- When lifting heavy objects, use both hands.
- To stand up, use the leg muscles.
- If needed, ask for assistance.



Remember

Several products and equipment are delivered to the salon in large and heavy packing and may have to be moved to a different area to be unpacked. Appropriate lifting methods should be used while lifting heavy boxes.

Suggested Further Reading:

- ✓ *Aromatherapy for the Beauty Therapist, (1982), By Valerie Ann Worwood*
- ✓ *Beauty Therapy Resource Pack 3 (1992), By Joan Scott*