

*Bay of Plenty District Health Board is committed to improving and protecting the health of the communities in the Bay of Plenty district.*

## Position Statement – Skin Piercing

Skin piercing carries significant risks that can affect health.

Bay of Plenty District Health Board supports infection control policies that reduce harm from skin piercing.

Skin piercing in this context includes body piercing, tattooing (including traditional, such as *tautau* and *ta moko*, and some appearance treatment procedures), and any other procedure where the skin is pierced.

The contamination of piercing items and other equipment such as those used in skin piercing has long been recognised as a mode for transmitting blood-borne viral diseases. Operators and clients in the skin piercing industry risk contracting a range of infections which can lead to serious illness. Unsafe skin piercing may lead to the transmission of communicable diseases such as Hepatitis B and C, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and bacterial skin or wound infections.

To minimise these risks operators need to implement policies which address infection control procedures, operator competencies, education and training, and compliance with relevant standards.

There are currently no regulations governing the appearance industry. However, the Health Act 1956 empowers territorial authorities to improve and protect public health by ascertaining any conditions that may be injurious to health. Some territorial authorities (Auckland, New Plymouth, Napier, Timaru and Dunedin) in New Zealand have implemented bylaws and licensing requirements for skin piercing.

A survey by Toi Te Ora Public Health showed that there was a very high level of support from respondents for beauty salons and places that do tattoos and piercings being required to be regularly inspected for hygiene and safety. Over 90% of respondents agreed with this (Toi Te Ora Public Health, 2016, page 24).

### **Bay of Plenty District Health Board advocates and supports the following:**

- Implementation of any future national regulations such as registration by local government of all tattooists, skin piercing businesses and individuals.
- Implementation of local government bylaws and licensing requirements which apply standards to those persons who practise skin piercing
- Implementation of risk management (infection control) measures by all tattooists, skin piercing businesses and individuals
- The role of territorial authorities to actively administer the provisions of the Health Act 1956 and



any other relevant legislation, policies, and bylaws

- Engaging with the community to raise awareness of the risks associated with skin piercing

**References and further information**

Ministry of Health (1998). *Guidelines for the Safe Piercing of Skin*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Health (2010). *Customary Tattooing Guidelines for Operators*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

New Zealand Health Act 1956.

Toi Te Ora Public Health (2016) *Issues of Health and Wellbeing Population Survey 2016*  
<https://www.toiteora.govt.nz/kapsurvey>

**Adopted by:** the Bay of Plenty District Health Board at its 17 October 2018 meeting.

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