

# CHAPTER 4

## workplace and personal health and safety

### What's in this chapter

This chapter contains the knowledge required to ensure salon safety and accident procedures; maintenance of tools, equipment and work areas; and the safe use of chemicals and equipment in the salon.

#### Topics

► Understand the importance of occupational health and safety (OHS)

Define OHS

Understand the role of OHS authorities

► Prevent injuries in the workplace

Understand and prevent Occupational

Overuse Syndrome (OOS)

Reduce stress and fatigue

Handle chemicals correctly

Implement hygiene practices

► Prevent and report accidents

Prevent accidents in the salon

Work safely with electricity

Report accidents

► Apply first aid

Use the first aid cabinet

Give basic first aid

► Appendix: Hazards checklist

# Understand the importance of occupational health and safety (OHS)

## Define OHS

In Australia, each state and territory has a government body responsible for the safety of workers in their workplaces. This is called occupational health and safety (OHS). These government bodies provide regulations to prevent harm to employees while at work, and to ensure that actions at work do not result in harm to other people (including members of the public).

Effective OHS requires people in places of work to perform specific duties to ensure that people are not harmed as a result of work activities. An employer must therefore take all practical steps to ensure the safety of employees while at work. In particular, employers must:

- ▶ provide and maintain a safe working environment
- ▶ provide and maintain facilities for the safety and health of employees while at work
- ▶ ensure that equipment in the workplace is maintained to be safe for employees
- ▶ ensure that employees are not exposed to hazards in the course of their work
- ▶ develop procedures for dealing with emergencies that may arise.

Effective OHS management requires the involvement of everyone in a place of work. Employees must look after themselves and must also ensure that their actions do not harm anyone else.

## Understand the role of OHS authorities

### State and territory authorities

The following is a list of the state and territory authorities that administer OHS laws and guidelines (at the time of writing). These state bodies set out guidelines for workplace safety.

**Table 3.1** State and territory OHS authorities

State/territory	Organisation	Website
ACT	ACT WorkCover	<a href="http://www.workcover.act.gov.au">www.workcover.act.gov.au</a>
NSW	WorkCover NSW	<a href="http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au">www.workcover.nsw.gov.au</a>
NT	NT WorkSafe	<a href="http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au">www.worksafe.nt.gov.au</a>
QLD	QLD Workplace Health and Safety	<a href="http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace">www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace</a>
SA	SafeWork SA	<a href="http://www.safework.sa.gov.au">www.safework.sa.gov.au</a>
TAS	WorkCover Tasmania	<a href="http://www.workcover.tas.gov.au">www.workcover.tas.gov.au</a>
VIC	Victorian WorkCover Authority	<a href="http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au">www.workcover.vic.gov.au</a>
WA	WorkSafe WA	<a href="http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au">www.worksafe.wa.gov.au</a>

The laws and regulations that these government bodies administer cover all workplaces, but many include some specific guidelines that are relevant to hairdressing, such as:

- ▶ ensuring a safe work environment
- ▶ avoiding musculo-skeletal injury
- ▶ handling chemicals.

For example, WorkCover NSW provides a set of *Health and Safety Guidelines for Hairdressers* in NSW. These guidelines include areas such as:

- ▶ consulting with employees about health and safety issues
- ▶ handling hazardous substances
- ▶ reducing sprains and strains
- ▶ implementing hygiene
- ▶ preventing slips and falls.

The OHS authorities in other states and territories issue similar guidelines for workplaces within their state.

## The Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC)

There is also a national body that oversees the OHS guidelines in all the states and territories, but which does not make or enforce any laws. This body is the Australian Safety and Compensation Council, or ASCC. The ASCC website <[www.ascc.gov.au](http://www.ascc.gov.au)> describes its role as follows.

Through a partnership of government, unions and industry the ASCC leads and coordinates national efforts to:

- prevent workplace death, injury and disease
- improve workers' compensation arrangements, and
- improve the rehabilitation and return to work of injured workers.

The ASCC also:

- provides a national forum for Commonwealth, state and territory governments, employers and employees to consult and participate in the development of policies relating to OHS and workers' compensation matters, and
- promotes national consistency in the OHS and workers' compensation regulatory framework.

The ASCC is not a regulatory authority and does not make or enforce laws. OHS laws in Australia operate in each of the state, territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions, and are administered by jurisdictions' OHS authorities.

Source: <[www.ascc.gov.au/ascc/aboutus/whatwedo](http://www.ascc.gov.au/ascc/aboutus/whatwedo)>

## What areas are covered by OHS laws and regulations?

In a hairdressing salon, the following general areas of the work environment are covered by OHS laws:

- ventilation
- temperature and humidity
- seating
- flooring
- electrical equipment
- basins and fittings
- rest areas
- hours of work.

Some OHS laws and regulations require that workplaces try to prevent musculo-skeletal problems as much as possible. Hairdressers often suffer from 'Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS)', which is caused by processes and work conditions that require repeated or forceful movements, or cramped and awkward body postures.

OHS laws therefore require employers to look carefully at the following factors to prevent OOS in the workplace:

- ▶ design of equipment and tasks
- ▶ organisation of work
- ▶ hours of work
- ▶ work environment
- ▶ training and education.

See 'Understand and prevent Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS)' overleaf for more information.

## Revision questions

- 1 Explain in your own words why having OHS guidelines in the workplace is important.
- 2 Name the government body in your state or territory that administers occupational health and safety laws.
- 3 What is the name of the Australian national body that oversees OHS guidelines?
- 4 List four areas in a hairdressing salon that would usually be covered by OHS laws.
- 5 What does OOS stand for?

## Prevent injuries in the workplace

WorkCover NSW, in its *Health and Safety Guidelines for Hairdressers* (2003), describes the importance of maintaining health and safety in the workplace.

Community costs and personal costs occur as well as the cost to insurer and employer when workplace incidents happen. All of the problems associated with an accident or injury in the workplace need to be considered. By law, workplaces must have policies and procedures in place to prevent injury to workers, clients and any other visitors.

### Understand and prevent Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS)

As mentioned in the section above, hairdressers are at risk of developing a variety of musculo-skeletal problems. Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS) is the term now used to cover many different conditions and injuries which cause discomfort or recurring/constant pain in muscles, tendons and other soft tissues. OOS injuries may be short-term or long-term.

OOS develops over a period of time, and many activities can contribute to the problem. It was previously called Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), and it is often related to work which involves:

- ▶ constant, repetitive, strong movement of parts of the body
- ▶ standing in the same posture (particularly awkward or constrained postures) for a long time.

OOS can affect many parts of your body, including the:

- ▶ lower back
- ▶ legs
- ▶ shoulders

- ▶ neck
- ▶ wrists.

## Methods of preventing OOS

Control methods can be introduced into a salon to prevent OOS-type injuries. This is called 'job redesigning', and involves making adjustments to the following areas.

### 1 *Posture and position*

To correct your posture while working in a salon, think about:

- wearing comfortable shoes
- suggesting the use of flooring which is comfortable to stand on
- adjusting the height of chairs or cutting stools to help keep your arms below the height of your shoulders
- working straight-on to a task, rather than at an angle, with your head upright and facing straight forward
- taking regular breaks.

### 2 *Layout of the salon*

The layout of the work areas and passages in the salon, and the location of equipment and materials, determine how your body will be positioned as you work. Try to:

- have enough room to move around so you can change the position of your body when needed
- reduce the amount of reaching and bending you do by setting work benches at appropriate heights, and keeping your equipment within reach without twisting or bending
- use chairs that can be adjusted up or down
- use trolleys with wheels to reduce carrying and reaching for equipment.

### 3 *Work organisation*

Using different muscles, letting tired or sore muscles recover, and changing your work tasks during the day are very important to preventing OOS. Employers should try to:

- encourage their staff to shift between sitting and standing jobs, or to change tasks when possible
- keep the appointments for each staff member at an acceptable level, so that no staff member takes on an excessive amount of physically demanding tasks.

#### 4 *Tools and equipment*

When selecting tools and equipment, ensure that:

- tools are not too heavy
- handles are designed to minimise wrist strain—if they require an awkward hand position, alternatives should be found.

In addition, all staff need to be properly trained in these areas, so they know how to prevent OOS injuries. If you know how to vary tasks, change your posture and make sure the salon is organised to reduce your risk of injury, you will contribute to a safer environment for yourself and others.

## Reduce stress and fatigue

Stress-related problems can occur due to the fact that hairdressers often work long or difficult hours. This, in turn, can have a negative influence on productivity, work quality and personal health and safety.

Fatigue can be reduced by minimising excessive overtime, ensuring regular rest and lunch breaks are taken, and varying works tasks.

To deal with personal stress, try to:

- arrange time for hobbies and home life
- get more enjoyment from hard work rather than treating it like an unpleasant chore
- avoid wasting time and energy on being angry
- dismiss unpleasant incidents and forget them as soon as possible; talk to someone not involved who you trust to help you work out an appropriate way to deal with anger
- practise relaxation regularly
- get sufficient rest and sleep
- talk with someone else you value about how you feel if you are stressed.

Remember, if life feels like it's getting out of hand, talk to a qualified practitioner.



## Handle chemicals correctly

People working in the hairdressing industry come into frequent contact with chemicals. A range of health effects have known to be associated with the use of these chemicals, including dermatitis, respiratory problems and cancer.

Chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide, and materials such as asbestos, can be classed as 'hazardous substances'. It is therefore important to know what substances you are using, what their potential risks are, and how to reduce your risk to any harmful effects.

Here are some general guidelines for handling hazardous chemicals.

### ► *Instructions and training*

- Make sure you have been properly trained in the use of all chemicals, and are supervised in using any chemical you are not familiar with.
- Always read the instructions supplied with the chemical before opening or using, and if a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is available for the chemical, make sure you read this carefully.
- Make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions *exactly* when handling the chemical, and use it only for the purpose it has been designed for.
- Make sure any chemical you use is properly labelled.

### ► *Protective equipment*

- Wear and use personal protective equipment (PPE) including garments, eye protection and gloves where indicated.
- Even using relatively harmless chemicals (e.g. shampoos, conditioners, etc.) continually can cause skin irritation, so use barrier creams, moisturisers or gloves where necessary to prevent this.

### ► *Storage and disposal*

- Store the chemical according to the instructions from the manufacturer.
- Seal all containers tightly, and limit how often you open containers to the air.



- Dispose of unused mixtures and empty containers carefully.
- Always check the use-by dates on chemicals, and use the older stock before newer stock.
- *Never* use food or drink containers to store chemicals, or vice versa.
- Keep all chemicals out of reach of children.

➤ **Handling**

- Use chemicals only from well-labelled bottles. Don't let the liquid destroy the label when pouring.
- Do not intermix substances which are not specified in the instructions.
- Keep flammable products away from any fire source, including cigarettes.
- Only use chemicals in a well-ventilated area. Turn on an extractor fan or open a window, and make sure air conditioning filters are working correctly.
- Avoid wearing jewellery or using nickel-coated utensils while handling chemicals.
- Remember that if there are any signs of abrasion or tenderness on a client's skin, do not use any product which may cause irritation.

➤ **Choosing products**

- Try to substitute products for safer products if available. Health hazard information found in a MSDS will inform you of less hazardous products you could use.

### Allergies

Some workers in the hairdressing industry develop an allergic response when they come in contact with particular chemicals. This response might appear after a 'sensitisation period', which could be a few days after contact with the particular chemical, or several years later. It may result in an ongoing problem such as severe and widespread **eczema**.

#### Eczema

A skin irritation that causes a red rash, itching and other symptoms. It is not contagious.

An allergy test can be used to identify the particular chemical, or 'sensitiser', that is causing the reaction so that the person knows to avoid contact with the chemical. Once a person in the hairdressing industry has become sensitised to a chemical, however, they often need to consider that the problem may be long-term, and consider the effects of remaining in the profession.

### Dermatitis

Hairdressers are prone to dermatitis because of:

- ▶ excessive contact with water and shampoo products, which dry and remove the natural sebum (oil) levels from the skin—apprentices may have a high level of such contact
  - ▶ frequent contact with hair products containing recognised irritants and sensitisers.
- To help prevent occupational dermatitis:
- ▶ Avoid prolonged contact with water, especially during shampooing.
  - ▶ Avoid contact with products that seem to contribute to dermatitis.
  - ▶ Wear protective gloves when using irritating chemicals.
  - ▶ Remove the residue of chemical products immediately from the skin.
  - ▶ Use protective/barrier creams and skin repair creams/moisturisers.
  - ▶ Avoid common known sensitisers.

### Implement hygiene practices

In addition to the guidelines listed above for the prevention of OOS and chemical injury, establishing and maintaining good hygiene practices is an important part of the protection process for the salon worker.

It is important that the salon is kept hygienically clean, with all fittings, equipment, furniture, materials and tools free from bacteria and/or germs that can cause infection or disease. Employers are responsible for ensuring the salon is cleaned according to the OHS regulations set down by the state health authorities.

## General hygiene practices

General hygiene practices include the following:

- Wash hands with antibacterial soap and dry them before and after attending clients.
- Cover any cuts or abrasions with a waterproof adhesive dressing.
- Protect your clothes and wear coveralls, especially when applying colour. Check local health regulations regarding work clothing, as many states stipulate that the clothing should be easily and immediately removed if contaminated with any bodily fluids.

- Infection control should be sufficient at all times to protect staff as well as clients from contracting infection within the salon.
- If you come into contact with bodily fluids, e.g. blood, or there is potential for this to occur, then sensible control measures should be taken to protect against the transmission of communicable infectious diseases, e.g. hepatitis, HIV.

## Hygiene for tools and equipment

Tools and equipment need to be physically cleaned so that all hair dust and dry scales are removed. Routine cleaning—washing with hot, soapy water—must be followed by rinsing or submerging tools in disinfectant for a time sufficient to destroy any bacteria.

- *Combs:* Clean in hot, soapy water and immerse in disinfectant for 15 minutes.
  - *Brushes:* Remove all hair and wash in warm water.
  - *Rollers:* At the end of each day, remove all hair particles and wash in hot, soapy water with disinfectant added. Leave to soak for 20 minutes.
  - *Scissors and razors:* Wipe with a cloth dampened with alcohol or disinfectant.
- Note:* Disposable blades for razors are now mandatory in most states and must be changed to provide a new blade for each client.



Snippex

Many disinfectants gradually deteriorate after they have been diluted with water. This allows some forms of bacteria to survive and multiply, and makes the disinfectant much less effective. A fresh solution of disinfectant should be prepared in a clean container every day.

- ▶ *Clippers:* Brush the hair free of the blades, then wipe the head with alcohol, antiseptic or disinfectant.
- ▶ *Towels, capes and other linen:* Wash towels after use. A clean towel must be used for each client, and the protective gown must also be laundered this way unless it does not come into contact with the neck.
- ▶ *Thermal equipment* (e.g. blow dryers, hot tongs, thermal crimpers, straighteners): Remove hair and wipe with disinfectant.
- ▶ *Hair dryers and steamer hoods:* Wipe with hot, soapy water and disinfectant.

On completion of the day's service, all equipment and work surfaces used should be wiped down, cleaned and disinfected. Floors should be washed regularly with products suitable for the surface that can adequately prevent bacterial growth.

## Revision questions

- 1 Name five parts of the body that OOS may affect.
- 2 List five things you may do in a salon that involve reaching or bending. Next to each one, suggest a way this reaching or bending could be minimised.
- 3 Re-read the section 'Handle chemicals correctly' on pages 79–80. There are 19 points about handling chemicals listed here. Then, without looking back at the text, jot down as many of the points as you can remember in your own words. (If possible, swap your answers with another student and see how many you can remember between you.) You can then complete the list in your own words by checking the text.
- 4 a Why might apprentices be more prone to dermatitis than other salon workers?  
b Name four measures you could take to help prevent dermatitis.
- 5 Describe the cleaning procedure for the following hairdressing tools:
  - a brushes
  - b scissors and razors
  - c clippers
  - d thermal equipment.

**Workplace hazard identification form**

	YES	NO
<b>Ergonomic issues</b>		
Does the salon have a system for identifying hazards, relating to manual handling, hazardous substances and plant?		
Are there specific risks in movement, posture and layout involved in manual handling tasks, e.g. bending, twisting, lifting or awkward postures?		
Are there any high risks in the work environment, e.g. lighting, heat, floor surfaces?		
Are there individual factors which need consideration, e.g. new employees, employees returning after a period of absence?		
Are there adequate control measures in place which minimise these risks, e.g. job design, supervision, information provision, training, appropriate tools, equipment, layout?		
<b>Hazardous substances</b>		
Does the salon have an MSDS for the hazardous substances available?		
Do the staff know where to access MSDS information?		
Are the work practices in accordance with the MSDS?		
Are the training systems for employees sufficient to prepare them in case of accidental exposure to the substances?		
Are storage arrangements adequate to control any risk of contamination between individual substances with any other substances?		
Are containers of hazardous substances properly labelled?		
Is there sufficient ventilation provided when the work involves the use of hazardous substances?		
<b>Equipment</b>		
Is the provided equipment suitable for designated use, and within the scope of the manufacturer's instructions for its proper use?		
Are the systems of work developed and implemented to ensure safe use of the equipment?		
Is the equipment maintained to enable use without risk to health and safety?		
<b>Housekeeping</b>		
Are work floors and work areas tidy, free from obstruction and uncluttered?		
Are the housekeeping systems adequate to reduce slipping and tripping hazards?		
<b>Lighting</b>		
Is all artificial lighting operating correctly?		
Are work areas sufficiently well lit?		
Inspected by: _____ Date: _____		
Owner/Supervisor's signature: _____ Date: _____		

Sample pages



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