



Welcome to the safe@work Hairdressing Module

Have you read the General Module, completed the test and printed your safe@work General Award of Attainment?

The Hairdressing Module should be done **AFTER** the General Module.

If it is some time since you have done the General Module you should read the Review Module. The test for this module contains some questions based on the Review Module.

There are common hazards that exist in the hairdressing industry. It is important to learn about these hazards and how they can be controlled so that people at work are not exposed to risk.

The Hairdressing Module contains information on:

- Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods
- Electricity
- Slips, Trips and Falls
- Fatigue, and
- Cash Handling and Opening and Closing Procedures.

Within the hairdressing industry, you may be involved in a range of work activities on a daily basis such as using a wide variety of tools and electrical appliances, chemical products, talking to clients and carrying out cleaning duties.

In your daily work you may use scissors, styling rods and rollers, rubber caps, hair dryers, curling tongs, chemical solutions and treatments, and cleaning equipment and products. You must be trained in how to use these tools, appliances and products and made aware of any potential hazards.

Key Point

Your employer must make sure your health and safety is not harmed in any way and you must look after your own health and safety and not put others at risk.

Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods

In the hairdressing industry you may work daily with hazardous substances and dangerous goods such as hair dyes, hair spray, perm solutions and cleaning products.

Dermatitis of the hands, latex sensitivity and breathing problems caused by breathing in fumes from sprays and solutions can be a problem in the industry.

Your employer must make sure you use hazardous substances and dangerous goods according to the manufacturers or supplier's written instructions (the Material Safety Data Sheet or MSDS) while you must follow the agreed safe work procedures for your work place.



Key Point

If you need more information on the substances that you are using, ask your supervisor or health and safety representative.

When handling perm solutions, dyes and cleaning products you should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce the risk of harm to your health. PPE and clothing used in the hairdressing industry includes gloves, protective hand creams and coveralls (aprons). Your employer should provide these items.

Ventilation

Lack of ventilation can create risk to the safety of hairdressers. Good ventilation should be provided to control fumes and odours from the hazardous substances used everyday in the hairdressing industry. Ventilation can be provided through windows that open, an air conditioning system or extraction fans.

Ventilation is also important for the control of heat and cold. For example, the use of hair dryers and other heating equipment can cause a build up of heat in the work area.

Contact Dermatitis

Contact dermatitis is an inflammation that occurs when a substance comes into contact with skin. The skin is irritated and there is an abnormal (allergic) reaction. The skin may be red, swollen, tender, hot, painful or itchy. If the reaction is severe, the skin may blister or weep, and can become cracked or crusty.

The chemicals in hair dyes, sprays, perm solutions and cleaning detergents can cause skin irritation in some employees.

Key Point

Your employer should provide protective gloves and barrier creams to reduce the risk of contact dermatitis, and you should use them.

Different employees will react differently to each substance, and some may have no reaction at all. Some substances will cause pain or discomfort. Other substances could be used regularly for a long time before the skin begins to react.

In some cases, employees will need long periods away from work because of exposure to substances, or even may no longer be able to work in the hairdressing industry.

Latex sensitivity

Hairdressers who use disposable gloves may also develop sensitivity to latex over a period of time.

Latex is used extensively in the manufacture of disposable gloves. Cornstarch powder is often used in latex gloves to make them easier to put on. Latex proteins are absorbed into the cornstarch powder. The powder then irritates the skin causing the allergic reaction. When the gloves are removed the powder can be released into the air and may be inhaled.



Latex sensitivity usually leads to dry, raw skin, most commonly on the hands. Severe allergic reactions can result in sustained dermatitis with blisters and respiratory symptoms.

Your employer may provide you with powder free, low allergen gloves to reduce the risk of a reaction to latex.

Electricity

Hairdressers frequently use electrical appliances, such as hair dryers and curling tongs, in work areas where water may be present. It is important to remember that electricity and water do not mix.

Note: Students on work experience must not undertake any task which may place them at risk from electrical sources.

Key Point

Your employer must make sure that electrical equipment is in good working order and is regularly checked.

To reduce the risk of electric shock you must follow instructions, which may include remembering to:

- switch off appliances at the power point before you pull out the plug
- disconnect broken appliances, and do not use frayed cords or broken power points
- not use too many appliances from the same power point, and
- keep electrical cords off the floor.

Slips, Trips and Falls

In the hairdressing industry, causes of slips, trips or falls include:

- slippery surfaces (e.g. hair left on the floor, surfaces that are wet, polished or oily)
- unsuitable surface texture of the floor
- foot-wear that does not provide enough tread
- moving from one surface to another and variable floor levels
- equipment, tool trolleys and rubbish left in the way
- steps and ladders used incorrectly
- loose clothing caught on furniture or appliances
- lighting which is not bright enough
- exposure to some chemical substances, and
- being hit by a moving or falling object.

Key Point

Hair should be regularly swept up, spills cleaned up and care taken that trolleys and other equipment is not left in areas where people will walk.



It is important that you wear appropriate footwear in the hairdressing industry. Low heeled comfortable shoes with closed toes and rubber soles reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls, as well as back strain. You should check the condition of your shoes. Accidents may happen because your shoes are worn, or because there is no tread left on the bottom of your shoes.

Your employer should provide a suitable non-slip floor surface and good lighting. In some work places, floor surfaces can be chemically treated to increase traction and reduce the risk of slips and falls.

Fatigue

Hairdressers' work tasks often involve standing or bending over for long periods of time. There are some things you and your employer can do to reduce fatigue.

Where possible, you should sit down for work tasks, preferably on an adjustable or ergonomically designed stool or chair.

If an adjustable chair is provided for the client, make sure you adjust it up or down so that you are not stooping or stretching to reach a client's hair.

Key Point

Wearing low heeled, comfortable, covered shoes will help reduce fatigue.

It is important to take regular rest breaks. Your employer should allocate time for rests breaks and vary your tasks throughout the day. You should have enough time to gradually get used to a new job.

Talk to your employer or supervisor if a stool or chair is not provided or you have difficulty in trying to handle too many demands at once.

Cash Handling and Opening and Closing Procedures

Cash handling

In a work place where cash is handled, you are more likely to face the threat of robbery or attack.

To reduce the risk of injury or harm, employers should have cash handling procedures and must train you in these procedures.

Procedures should cover:

- removal of excess cash from the till to safe storage
- not handling cash in front of customers, and
- delivery and deposit of money at the bank.



Opening and closing procedures

Your employer should have simple written procedures for opening and closing hairdressing salons. This is important if the salon is isolated, or if you have to open and close it when the employer or other employees are not around. It is safer if more than one person opens or closes the salon.

Procedures should cover checking to make sure:

- there are no suspicious people or vehicles around when you enter or leave the work place
- no one has broken in - if there are signs of a break-in, you must know what action to take
- before leaving, that the safe (if there is one) and all entries, exits and windows are securely locked and
- there are no unauthorised persons remaining in the salon.

Key Point

You should be made aware of procedures for handling cash and opening and closing and you should follow them.

Self-Assessment Questions

Now try the self-assessment questions. Before starting the questions, be sure to enter your name and the name of the school exactly as you want it to appear on your Award of Attainment. We ask you to provide these details so that you can be issued with the Award of Attainment.

There are 16 questions. If you get 12 or more correct you can print online a safe@work Award of Attainment. The Principal of your school will then sign the Award of Attainment and validate it with the school stamp.