



Non-binding Guidelines for the Hairdressing Sector

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Introductory remarks

The preparation of non-binding guidelines for the hairdressing sector is part of a set of jointly agreed activities to support an autonomous implementation of the European Framework Agreement on the Protection of Occupational Health and Safety in the Hairdressing Sector.

This draft was prepared by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in line with the conclusions of discussions at the meetings held with the social partners on 26 March 2019, 5 December 2019, 15 September 2020, 2 December 2020 and 29 March 2021.

All the elements considered relevant by the social partners are included in this draft brochure. However, to keep it short and simple, not all of them are explored in depth.

It was decided that this publication should be aimed at national administrations (including national labour inspectorates), which should, in turn, adapt the brochure as appropriate to effectively reach individual hairdressers in their country ⁽¹⁾.

The content is based closely on reference documents provided by the social partners.

There is no doubt that occupational health and safety at work and, in particular, the occupational health and safety golden rule – the general principles of prevention – have become more important than ever. This is the reason for including in this document – on top of the agreed content – some information on the guidelines addressing workplace challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁽¹⁾ These guidelines might also be useful for other organisations, institutions, working groups and committees at European Union and national levels.

1. Risk assessment in general

1.1. Legal obligation: Framework Directive 89/391/EEC

Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work ⁽²⁾ (framework directive) imposes on employers (including those in the hairdressing sector) various obligations. Pursuant to Article 5, the employer shall have a duty to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to the work. In this regard, Article 6 specifies that the employer shall take the measures necessary for the safety and health protection of workers, including prevention of occupational risks and provision of information and training, as well as provision of the necessary organisation and means.

In any workplace, including hairdressing salons, it is very important to apply the general principles of prevention. These principles encompass rules such as avoiding risks, combating the risk at source and evaluating the risks that cannot be avoided. In line with these principles, the employer shall conduct a risk assessment that takes into account the nature of the enterprise's activities.

Another principle that is very important in occupational health and safety is the principle of substitution, which, in this context, means giving preference to those cosmetic products ⁽³⁾ that offer the highest level of protection to the health and safety of workers. Where substitution is not possible, the employer shall use cosmetic products that involve the lowest level of exposure (dual-chamber applicators, pastes, granulates, etc.).

However, it should be highlighted that the paragraphs above explain the minimum requirements as laid down by the framework directive and other relevant directives, and Member States are allowed to maintain or apply stricter requirements. In other words, there is room for Member States to decide which specific solutions best suit their situation provided that the minimum requirements at European Union level are met. Therefore, users of these guidelines in Member States are advised to first check national provisions implementing the framework directive and other relevant directives in their national legal systems.

1.2. Risks and consequences

At the workplace, hairdressers are exposed to **different kinds of risks** that can cause pain and illness, as well as lead to the occurrence of accidents.

The majority of hairdressers are female (often of childbearing age). The working conditions of pregnant workers shall be in accordance with EU legislation, particularly [Directive 92/85/EEC](#) ⁽⁴⁾, national legislation and collective labour agreements. At EU level, particular occupational health and safety requirements as regards pregnant workers,

⁽²⁾ OJ L 183, 29.6.1989, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ Cosmetic products are regulated by Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on cosmetic products, as amended (OJ L 342, 22.12.2009, p. 59). Pursuant to the provisions of this regulation, for each cosmetic product placed on the market, the responsible person (e.g. manufacturer, importer or distributor) shall ensure safety and compliance with the relevant obligations set out in this regulation. Products used in a hairdressing salon shall be in conformity with the regulation.

⁽⁴⁾ Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (tenth individual directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC), as amended, p. 1.

workers who have recently given birth and workers who are breastfeeding should be taken into account by employers when planning and organising work activities (Articles 4(1) and 5). While respecting any existing stricter national provisions, the employer shall assess whether a pregnant woman can carry out a task in given working conditions. Annex I of the abovementioned directive contains a non-exhaustive list of agents, processes and working conditions for the purposes of assessment referred to in Article 4(1), whereas Annex II lists in a non-exhaustive manner agents and working conditions referred to in Article 6 (cases in which exposure is prohibited).

Occupational risks can have different causes: hairdressers' behaviour, the techniques used, the organisation of work and the design of the workplace. Working practices and environmental factors that could represent a risk to hairdressers' health and safety include:

- wet hand work,
- use of cosmetic products,
- use of blades and sharp instruments,
- standing for long periods of time,
- working with a bent posture for long periods of time,
- not wearing protective equipment or wearing it incorrectly,
- applying products in the wrong way (e.g. not diluting concentrated products, such as shampoos and colouring products, as indicated),
- insufficient variation of posture and of tasks,
- insufficient movement space,
- use of badly maintained equipment,
- bad lighting,
- draughts or temperature variations,
- noise,
- unsuitable storage (not dry, cool or at room temperature) of products (e.g. cosmetics, bottles, spray cans, flasks, containers).

These risks can contribute to **serious health conditions**. For example, adopting strenuous work postures for a long period of time, combined with repetitive movements, can cause pain in the hands, shoulders, back, legs (varicose veins) and feet, and cause work-related **musculoskeletal disorders**.

Repeated contact with water and cosmetic products can cause hand eczema, allergic reactions, headaches and respiratory problems.

Respiratory problems can also be caused by to an inadequate ventilation system or lack of such a system.

Noise at the workplace can also cause permanent hearing impairment or tinnitus. Noisy equipment (e.g. hairdryers) and even background music disturbs communication and increases the sense of fatigue.

The organisation of work tasks, organisation of the workplace and long and irregular working hours can also affect hairdressers – as any other worker – in the sense that they could suffer from **work-related stress**.

Generally speaking, such afflictions affect work and life quality and, in the long run, these health conditions could eventually force some hairdressers to leave the profession.

1.3. Risk assessment: a tool to determine the risk management

Conducting a risk assessment is a legal obligation and the best way to manage risks. Overall, a risk assessment needs to be adapted to a given workplace and its specificities. In principle, employers should assess the hairdressing salon to identify existing and potential risks and then list these, accompanied by preventive and protective measures. The employer should also discuss the findings with the staff and then put together a relevant preventive and protective plan.

To fulfil the risk assessment obligation, employers may want to familiarise themselves with some online tools available at European and national levels. For example, the Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) tool, developed by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), offers practical instructions and aids for the assessment of risks in the hairdressing sector. The tool is available at <https://oiraproject.eu/fr/oiraproject/tools/hairdressers>.

There are also national risk assessment resources and websites that are worth checking.

Countries with risk assessment resources

- **Belgium.** Infographic:
 - <http://www.coiffure.org/nl/sectorinfo/preventie-welzijn>
- **Germany.** Hairdressers' risk assessment app:
 - <https://www.bgw-online.de>

Countries with their own interactive risk assessment tool approach

- **The Netherlands:**
 - <https://healthyhairdresser.nl/>
 - <https://healthyhairdresser.nl/rie>
- **Ireland.** BeSMART:
 - <http://www.besmart.ie>
 - <http://www.besmart.ie/supported-business-types>
- **Spain.** *Peluquerías y centros de estética:*
 - <https://www.prevencion10.es/>
- **France.** The interactive risk assessment tool for hairdressers was made available online in January 2021 in partnership with health insurance organisations. It was accompanied by the publication of an information brochure presenting the main occupational risks related to the sector as well as key statistics in terms of work accidents and occupational diseases.
 - Tool: <https://www.inrs.fr/media.html?refINRS=outil75>

- Information leaflet: <https://www.inrs.fr/media.html?refINRS=ED %206397>

Outside the European Union

- **Norway.** *Risikohjelpen*, administrated by the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority: <https://risikohjelpen.arbeidstilsynet.no/>.
- **Switzerland.** *Protection de la santé et sécurité dans la branche de la coiffure. Manuel de la solution pour la branche* – a manual that must be made available in every hairdressing salon.
- **The United Kingdom.** <http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/> and <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/steps-needed-to-manage-risk.htm>.

The sources of information considered when carrying out and/or updating a risk assessment could be various and, in particular, could include the employers' own observations, comments and suggestions made by hairdressers, lessons learned from 'near-misses' (events that had the potential to result in injury, illness or damage but fortunately did not) and a log of accidents.

A risk assessment identifies risks and establishes appropriate preventive and protective actions to eliminate or reduce those risks.

In the case of hairdressing, the types of risks identified, and measures to address them, include:

- biological risks – implement good hygiene practices, for example regular disinfection of floors and toilets;
- physical risks – reduce noise and provide adequate lighting;
- chemical risks (to avoid reactions and sensitisation of the skin and the respiratory tract);
- electrical risks – use only certified equipment;
- slips, trips and falls – ensure that the workplace and all equipment are well maintained;
- burns and cuts – use only certified equipment;
- work-related stress – clearly define tasks, etc.

New risks can emerge at any time, sometimes requiring an immediate response. For example, as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, employers need to consider more factors relating to biological agents in their risk assessment and follow many more rules aimed at keeping their staff safe and preventing the spread of the coronavirus ⁽⁵⁾. To support employers in practical terms, EU-OSHA has published relevant guidance addressing COVID-19 at the workplace ⁽⁶⁾. This guidance helps employers to deal with health and safety aspects at work during this unprecedented health crisis ⁽⁷⁾. It also lists available national guidelines for specific sectors and occupations. Moreover, EU-OSHA has made available a specific online risk assessment tool to support COVID-19 workplace risk assessment.

It is worth noting that there is a legal requirement to document the risk assessment and the preventive or protective measures to be taken. When documenting the risk assessment, it is advisable to include:

⁽⁵⁾ Also imposed by public health authorities.

⁽⁶⁾ See section 3.

⁽⁷⁾ See also <https://coiffure.eu/social-dialogue/official-documents/covid-19-protection-health-hairdressers>.

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- the name and function of person(s) carrying out the assessment;
- the risks identified;
- which group of workers, if any, faces particular risks;
- any necessary measures taken as a result;
- the name and function of person(s) responsible for the measures;
- the follow-up time frame.

It is highly recommended that all workers, including hairdressers, become familiar with the obligatory prevention plan at their workplace and are instructed on how to act on a daily basis to ensure their own health and safety and that of their colleagues. In the case of hairdressing, this will include the safe handling of cosmetic products and the prevention of accidents.

2. Occupational safety and health specificities in the hairdressing sector

To promote aspects of the work environment related to health and safety in the sector, it is recommended that a task rota be developed so that, to the extent possible, repetitive movements or strenuous work over an extended period are avoided. It is also important to consider technical progress in ergonomics when purchasing new equipment and tools and when newly furnishing or re-equipping premises ⁽⁸⁾. To prevent accidents in the hairdressing salon and ensure a safe work environment, it is recommended that cosmetic products are stored under suitable conditions (cool up to room temperature), bottles are stored sealed in the original package and products that are a fire hazard are kept away from flammable materials ⁽⁹⁾. Moreover, it is recommended that collective and individual protective measures are taken ⁽¹⁰⁾.

2.1. Workplace

Minimum safety and health requirements for workplaces used for the first time and for workplaces already in use are set out in Annex I and Annex II, respectively, of [Directive 89/654/EEC](#) of 30 November 1989 concerning the minimum safety and health requirements for the workplace (first individual directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of [Directive 89/391/EEC](#)) ⁽¹¹⁾.

Both annexes impose obligations regarding basic parameters such as stability and solidity of electrical installations in buildings housing workplaces; emergency routes and exits; fire detection equipment; and firefighting equipment; as well as ventilation of enclosed workplaces to maintain adequate room temperature ⁽¹²⁾, natural and artificial lighting; floors, ceilings and roofs; windows, doors and gates; room dimensions; and air space in rooms – freedom of movement at the workstations, break rooms and sanitary equipment ⁽¹³⁾.

In general, in order to guarantee the health and safety of workers when at work, the workplace needs to be well organised and ergonomic. If the workplace does not meet these criteria, there is a high likelihood that workers will experience health issues.

Importantly, hairdressers, like other workers, need to deal on a regular basis with work-related stress ⁽¹⁴⁾, the causes of which can include a heavy workload, the necessity to work irregular hours, the inability to take sufficient breaks, excessive job demands or a lack of clarity as to the tasks to be carried out. It is worth noting that, in addition to mental health problems, workers suffering from stress for prolonged periods can develop serious physical health complaints such as musculoskeletal problems.

⁽⁸⁾ Clause 5(2) and Clause 5(3) (ergonomic workplaces) of the European Framework Agreement on the Protection of Occupational Health and Safety in the Hairdressing Sector.

⁽⁹⁾ Clause 6 (accident prevention and safety at work) of the European Framework Agreement on the Protection of Occupational Health and Safety in the Hairdressing Sector.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Clause 8 (collective protective measures) and Clause 9 (individual protective measures) of the European Framework Agreement on the Protection of Occupational Health and Safety in the Hairdressing Sector.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ L 393, 30.12.1989, p. 1, as amended.

⁽¹²⁾ For example, cold increases the muscle power required of the lower arms and puts stress on the tendons, leading to improper handling of equipment.

⁽¹³⁾ It is important to point out that the abovementioned directive lays down only minimum requirements and Member States may introduce more stringent requirements in this area.

⁽¹⁴⁾ For stress-related issues, see <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress>.

2.2. Training and education

It is important to remember that, during their professional career, hairdressers – in line with relevant national rules – need to undertake (refresher) courses on various professional topics such as ergonomic techniques and training sessions on occupational health and safety. The purpose is for them to be able to deal with the changing work environment and to be able to assess risks related to using certain techniques/postures/equipment or having certain habits.

The course content should be presented with a focus on practical aspects in a real-world environment to ensure that hairdressers put what they have learnt into practice regularly and successfully. This content could also be delivered via visual instructions, for example on video platforms, apps, social media and smartphones.

2.3. Musculoskeletal disorders

The most common **symptoms** of musculoskeletal disorders are pain, itching, carpal tunnel syndrome, irritation, heat, cramps, stiffness, weakness and loss of sense of touch while moving. Affected areas can include the shoulders, elbows, wrists/hands (upper limbs), knees (lower limbs), neck and back.

Musculoskeletal disorders can appear suddenly, but more usually develop gradually. Typically, pain and fatigue are first experienced at the end of the working day but resolve after a period of rest. Later, the pain may persist even after rest. In addition, the pain can cause sleep disturbance, which affects work performance. Subsequently, the symptoms can lead to short absences from work. Eventually, the pain may not wear off: tired muscles stop working efficiently and clinical symptoms appear. These problems develop slowly and it is often difficult to establish the cause. In order to avoid symptoms getting worse and becoming irreversible, hairdressers are advised to tell their doctor about these symptoms as soon as they appear.

The **causes** of musculoskeletal disorders are strain-causing postures, static strain and carrying out repetitive movements.

Hairdressers commonly assume strain-causing postures, such as working in the same position for long periods or standing on their feet for long periods while wearing unsuitable shoes. The nature of the work also requires them to perform repetitive movements such as repeatedly lifting their arms above their shoulders, raising their upper arms, leaning sideways or bending over forward, bending the neck forward and stretching out too much, and bending or twisting the wrists. Carrying out the same movements repeatedly and over long periods increases the risk of musculoskeletal disorders.

Static strain occurs when a part of body is held in largely the same position for a sustained period (more than 4 seconds), during which time the muscles are continuously under strain. This can lead to problems affecting the shoulders and arms, as well as the back. Static working positions can include sitting or standing or bending over for long periods. Static strain is common in jobs that involve frequent movements of the arms, elbows, wrists and fingers while the neck and shoulder area remains static.

Appropriate **preventive and protective measures** include the adoption of appropriate work practices: hairdressers should avoid adopting awkward postures for long durations by alternating tasks (task rotation), varying between standing and sitting work, using a hairdressing stool, walking around their customers while working, maintaining an appropriate distance (not too close, not too far, not too high, not too low), asking their

customers for cooperation (e.g. sitting up more or slouching down slightly) and adopting a healthy posture and verifying in the mirror that their posture is correct. Other measures include adjusting styling chairs and/or stools to the customer's height, adjusting the height of the backwash unit, using good cutting techniques (palm to palm) and using well-maintained scissors and lightweight dryers.

Further information on how hairdressers can prevent musculoskeletal disorders is available elsewhere ⁽¹⁵⁾.

2.3.1. Workplace design and adequate equipment

Musculoskeletal disorders can also be caused by other factors.

Such **causes** include a poorly designed workplace, for example passageways that are not wide enough; obstacles; insufficient movement space to perform tasks; incorrect height of styling chairs, client chairs, washbasins, rolling stools and trolleys; slippery floors; and insufficient and/or very bright light.

Working at the wrong height can put a strain on hairdressers' back, shoulder and neck muscles. This can occur if washbasins or the hairdressing chairs are not at the ideal height. For example, if the distance between the neck support and the back of the washbasin is too great, hairdressers have to stretch to reach the customer. This may cause problems in the back, shoulders and arms.

Preventive and protective measures fall into several areas.

The following are features of a well-designed work environment:

- functional proximity of the different areas and zones (enabling fluent circulation of traffic between the different zones);
- adequate and well-organised space providing freedom of movement at the workstations);
- good lighting (sufficient but not too bright);
- appropriate flooring (stable, even, solid and non-slip, without obstacles);
- good ventilation;
- consistent and appropriate temperature;
- a break room and an easily accessible storage space for products.

Good furniture is also important and includes:

- adjustable styling chairs (in which customers sit);
- height-adjustable and freestanding washbasins, with the option to put them in a diagonal position;
- an ergonomic chair / backwash unit combination (with the distance between the neck support and the back of the backwash unit such that hairdressers are required to stretch less towards customers);
- height-adjustable rolling stools with casters and a swivel seat that slopes gently forward to maintain the natural curve of the spine, and height-adjustable trolleys with casters.

Good equipment includes:

- an ergonomic pair of scissors with a finger rest, adapted specially for right- or left-

⁽¹⁵⁾ Sources: Verhamme, M., 'A close shave', *Transnational ESF Project – Final report – phase 1*, Coiffure, Ghent, 2014 (<https://www.videncenterforfrisorer.dk/wp-content/uploads/dokumenter/rapporter/A%20close%20shave.%20January%20March%202014%20TRANSNATIONAL%20ESF%20PROJECT.pdf>); and Coiffure, *Fiches Take Care of Yourself! – Skin prevention and ergonomics for hairdressers*, Coiffure, Ghent (https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/ubk-fiches-zorg_voor_jezelf-en-lr.pdf).

- handed users;
- light and wireless hair clippers with an oval-shaped grip;
- light hairbrushes with a sufficiently long and non-slip handle, and ergonomic hairdryers (light and as quiet as possible and adapted specially for right- or left-handed users), with a cylindrical or oval handle, which vibrate as little as possible.

A lack of maintenance of the equipment or inadequate replacement of damaged material increases the risk of a musculoskeletal injury from straining positions, efforts, repetitions of movements, etc.

2.4. Skin diseases

The most common **symptoms** of contact eczema (irritant and allergic) are dry skin, red patches, itching, flaking skin, split skin / blisters, pain and cracked skin.

Eczema is an inflammatory reaction of the skin that has different causes. Eczema is not contagious (and is not caused by bacteria, fungi or viruses) and cannot be passed on from one person to another. However, the damaged skin is prone to infection.

There are two kinds of contact eczema (dermatitis): irritant and allergic.

The **causes** of contact eczema are a wet environment and cosmetics, in particular washing hair while not wearing gloves, resulting in the skin coming in direct contact with cosmetic products (shampoo, hair dyes, hair treatments, etc.), and using scissors and razors on a regular basis.

Hand inflammation is usually the result of irritated skin caused by short-term contact with strong cosmetic products such as bleach or hair dyes; (mainly) repeated contact with irritants; and frequent work with wet products or mild cosmetic products such as shampoo and soap.

Repeated contact with water is one of the most important causes of eczema. Hairdressers run a greater risk of skin problems if their hands are exposed to water for more than 2 hours a day, if their hands are wet several times a day or if they apply shampoo to customers more than 10 times a day.

2.4.1. Preventive and protective measures

2.4.1.1. Adequate skin protection

The basic method of skin protection is the use of cosmetic products that offer the highest level of protection to the health and safety of workers or, if substitution is not possible, the use of products that involve the lowest level of exposure, and alternating tasks. It is recommended that there should be a balance between wet and dry work, when possible, to avoid repeated contact for long periods of time with water and skin-irritating substances. In principle, it is advisable for hairdressers to use a mild type of soap and hand cream (without colouring agents and perfumes), nickel-free equipment ⁽¹⁶⁾ and

⁽¹⁶⁾ Sources: Verhamme, M., 'A close shave', *Ergonomics for Start-up Hairdressers – Transnational ESF project*, Coiffure, Ghent, 2015 (<https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/ergonomie-2015-en-lr.pdf>); Coiffure, *Fiches Take Care of Yourself! – Skin prevention and ergonomics for hairdressers*, Coiffure, Ghent (https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/ubk-fiches-zorg_voor_jezelf-en-lr.pdf); and Verhamme, M., 'A close shave', *Transnational ESF Project – Final report – phase 1*, Coiffure, Ghent, 2014 (https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/esf-project-eng_def-hr-zonder_afloop-printer.pdf).

powder-free gloves ⁽¹⁷⁾ (a suitable type of disposable or reusable gloves), to remove jewellery from their hands and fingers when working and to cut the hair before dyeing it.

On top of alternating wet and dry work in a hairdressing salon, hairdressers can also protect their hands in their private life by wearing warm gloves when going out in the winter, using protective gloves when carrying out wet work at home and treating wounds immediately and hygienically.

Skin creams. The use of neutral, hydrating/moisturising skin creams is recommended. The creams should contain no colouring agents or perfumes, as these can cause allergies. All workers should have their own cream, or it must be provided in a dispenser to prevent cross-contamination between different workers.

Gloves (disposable or reusable – adapted to the task). Only the suitable kind of gloves offers protection. For some hairdressing activities, it is appropriate to use disposable gloves – which are very thin and generally more comfortable – whereas other hairdressing activities are better carried out while wearing reusable gloves, which are thicker. All gloves should be latex free.

Disposable gloves. Because wearing gloves is the most important measure to minimise skin problems, disposable gloves should always be worn when mixing, applying and rinsing out hair dye and colour rinses; when mixing, applying and rinsing out bleaching agents; when preparing, applying, neutralising and rinsing out perm solutions; and during other types of washing and rinsing of hair.

Working with the hands in water for more than 30 minutes per hour is not advisable. And when more than half the working day is spent washing or rinsing, the skin is very likely to become dry. For this reason it is recommended that, when carrying out these tasks, hairdressers wear disposable gloves (without latex) with long cuffs covering the wrist and lower forearm (ideally around 30 cm in length from cuff to fingertips) so that no liquid can run into them. These gloves should be powder free and smooth all over.

Hairdressers may want to wear thin cotton gloves under the waterproof gloves, to absorb perspiration.

Reusable gloves. In order to prevent hairdressers' eczema, hairdressers should also use thicker, reusable gloves for cleaning and disinfecting equipment, washbasins, floors, etc.

Gloves are personal and must never be shared. The gloves should be taken off correctly. The inside of reusable gloves should be dry before they are put on again.

Tips on using gloves:

- Buy the right shape and size (small/medium/large).
- Make sure that hands are clean and dry before putting gloves on.
- Remove jewellery.
- Put on cream after taking gloves off.
- Never reuse disposable gloves.
- When carrying out wet work, turn over the cuff of the hairdressers' glove.

2.4.1.2. Workplace design

There should be a separate mixing station that is, for the most part, closed off from the hairdressing salon.

⁽¹⁷⁾ See *PPE Regulation Guidelines - Guide to application of Regulation EU 2016/425 on personal protective equipment* (<https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/29201>) and Council Directive 89/656/EEC of 30 November 1989 on the minimum health and safety requirements for the use by workers of personal protective equipment at the workplace.

2.4.1.3. Non-allergic equipment

Some people are allergic to the metal nickel and experience an allergic reaction when objects, such as jewellery, or equipment containing nickel come in contact with their skin. Hairdressers may be allergic to nickel before entering the profession or develop such an allergy later (individuals who are allergic to one substance are prone to develop allergies to others). In hairdressing salons, nickel can be found in stainless steel utensils such as scissors and hairpins, exposing hairdressers who are allergic to the risk of irritation or allergic reactions.

It is recommended that hairdressers to remove jewellery from their hands and fingers and keep it off throughout the working day. This is because wearing jewellery hinders them from washing and drying their hands correctly, something that is necessary frequently when carrying out wet work. In addition, moisture and cosmetics can collect under the jewellery and cause skin problems.

Further information on skin diseases is available elsewhere ⁽¹⁸⁾ ⁽¹⁹⁾.

2.5. Respiratory problems

Hairdressers may experience respiratory problems as a result of exposure to substances present in cosmetic products such as dyes, bleaches, hair-straightening products, hairsprays, perfumes and fragrances. Such exposure can cause an allergic reaction in the airways, leading to symptoms that include coughing, wheezing and breathlessness, sneezing, congestion and asthma.

It is worth noting that respiratory disease develops only after repeated exposure over a long period to low levels of such substances. Symptoms can appear after using the substance in question and are exacerbated by a lack of (proper) ventilation. Over time, once an individual has been sensitised to a particular substance, a single contact with even very small amounts of that substance can trigger the symptoms at much lower levels than those that initially caused the hypersensitive state. The affected individual's health often improves when away from work.

Preventive and protective measures include risk assessment, use of the substitution principle and a good ventilation system.

As suggested in section 1, employers should assess the risks to identify which substances with the potential to cause respiratory problems are used or are generated by the performed tasks and decide who might be harmed and in what way. Subsequently, they should use products that offer the highest level of protection to the health and safety of workers, or products that involve the lowest level of exposure in line with the substitution principle. Employers need to think about methods to prevent exposure if substitution is not possible and minimise the exposure concentration, time and frequency, and the number of workers exposed. The risk assessment should thus include methods of managing emissions at source by modifying the work process (avoiding the production of aerosols

⁽¹⁸⁾ Sources: Verhamme, M., 'A Close Shave', *Transnational ESF Project – Final report – phase 1*, Coiffure, Ghent, 2014 (<https://www.videncenterforfrisorer.dk/wp-content/uploads/dokumenter/rappporter/A%20close%20shave.%20January%20March%202014%20TRANSNATIONAL%20ESF%20PROJECT.pdf>); and Coiffure, *Fiches Take Care of Yourself! – Skin prevention and ergonomics for hairdressers*, Coiffure, Ghent.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Source: 'SafeHair 1 and 2: Skin protection in hairdressing work' at <https://www.safehair.eu/safehair/homepage>, including Medical reference document: https://www.safehair.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Documents/Grundlagendokument/Occupational_Skin_Diseases_in_hairdressing_EN.pdf.

and vapours, installing a good ventilation system to control emissions and other workplace arrangements such as designing separate areas for mixing substances).

It is strongly recommended that hairdressers use non-vaporising bleaching agents and pump sprays (without gas) and dilute concentrated products (e.g. shampoos, dyes) in the right way.

It is advisable that exposure and health problems should be monitored and reassessed on a regular basis. In the case of respiratory symptoms that could be related to work, medical controls should be put in place. It is advisable that the findings should be recorded and workers and/or their representatives should be consulted, in particular, when assessing risks, exposures and respiratory problems occurring in workplaces, when substituting some substances, on the choice of personal protective equipment and on the results of monitoring, including health monitoring. It is worth noting that for some workers exposure to latex may result not only in skin rash, hives, itching and nasal, eye or sinus symptoms, but also in a latex allergy ⁽²⁰⁾ or asthma.

Further information on skin diseases is available elsewhere ⁽²¹⁾.

2.6. Tinnitus, auditory damage and fatigue due to noise at work

Exposure to a high level of noise at work²² over a long time can cause tinnitus (ringing, whistling, zooming or humming in the ears) or hearing impairment, which is a painful condition, and can lead to sleep disturbance. Hearing impairment may be permanent. Hearing damage can also be caused by a sudden very loud sound.

A high level of noise at work, which in the case of hairdressing salons comes from noisy equipment (e.g. hairdryers) and background music, can also make it more difficult to hear warnings. In addition, people are less aware of what is happening in their surroundings, which can lead to safety risks, with a risk of injuries. Noise also makes communication more strained, which increases feelings of fatigue.

Reducing the volume of background noise, for example by turning down the music, makes it easier to talk and to hear others talk, and conversations can be better followed.

It is necessary to ask the question 'Is there a noise problem and can I have a normal conversation with my co-workers who are at a distance of 2 metres?'. If it is not possible to reduce the noise of equipment, then it ideally should be replaced with equipment that is quieter or with a different, quieter process and to limit the time that workers spend in a noisy space.

⁽²⁰⁾ There is also a risk of type I allergy (shock) for a customer.

⁽²¹⁾ Source: EU-OSHA, 'Respiratory sensitisers', *Facts 39*: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/factsheet-39-respiratory-sensitisers/view>.

²² For legal provisions, see Directive 2003/10/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 February 2003 on the minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (noise) (Seventeenth individual directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC, as amended, OJ L 42, 15.2.2003, p. 38).

List of useful links

Brochures produced by social partners

Verhamme, M., 'A close shave', *Ergonomics for Start-up Hairdressers – Transnational ESF project*, Coiffure, Ghent, 2015: <https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/ergonomie-2015-en-lr.pdf>.

Verhamme, M., 'A close shave', *Preventing Skin Complaints for Start-up Hairdressers – Transnational ESF project*, Coiffure, Ghent, 2015: <https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/huidpreventie-2015-en-lr.pdf>.

Coiffure, *Fiches Take Care of Yourself! – Skin prevention and ergonomics for hairdressers*, Coiffure, Ghent: https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/ubk-fiches-zorg_voor_jezelf-en-lr.pdf.

Verhamme, M., 'A close shave', *Transnational ESF Project – Final report – phase 1*, Coiffure, Ghent, 2014: https://www.febelhair.org/sites/default/files/esf-project-eng_def-hr-zonder_afloop-printer.pdf.

SafeHair, 'SafeHair 1 and 2' (skin protection in hairdressing work social partner project): <https://www.safehair.eu/safehair/homepage/>.

ErgoHair, *Cut to the Chase! – Ergonomic tips for the employer*, EU Project ErgoHair VS/2017/0077: <https://www.ergohair.eu/wp-content/uploads/ERGOHAIR-EMPLOYERS-2019-ENG.pdf>.

ErgoHair, *Cut to the Chase! – Ergonomic tips for the employee*, EU Project ErgoHair VS/2017/0077: <https://www.ergohair.eu/wp-content/uploads/ERGOHAIR-EMPLOYEES-2019-ENG.pdf>.

ErgoHair, *Cut to the Chase! – Ergonomic tips for education and training*, EU Project ErgoHair VS/2017/0077: <https://www.ergohair.eu/wp-content/uploads/ERGOHAIR-EDUCATION-2019-ENG.pdf>.

Studies by social partners

ErgoHair, *Musculoskeletal Health of Hairdressers – Protection of occupational health and safety at workplace*, 2019 (medical reference document): <https://www.ergohair.eu/wp-content/uploads/ERGOHAIR-MEDICAL-REFERENCE-DOCUMENT-2019-ENG.pdf>.

Sonsmann, F., Braumann, A., Wilke, A., Malte John, S. and Wulfhorst, B., *Occupational Skin Diseases in the Hairdressing Trade*, University of Osnabrück (medical reference document): https://www.safehair.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Documents/Grundlegendokument/Occupational_Skin_Diseases_in_hairdressing_EN.pdf.

Skoufi, G. I., Nena, E., Kostikas, K., Lialios, G. A., Constantinidis, T. C., Daniil, Z. and Gourgoulisanis, K., 'Work-related respiratory symptoms and airway disease in hairdressers', *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, vol. 4, 2013, pp. 53–60.

Dulon, M., Peters, C., Wendeler, D. and Nienhaus, A., 'Trends in occupational airway diseases in German hairdressers: Frequency and causes', *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, vol. 54, 2011, pp. 486–493.

Examples from Member States

ErgoHair, *Good Practice Examples*: <https://www.ergohair.eu/wp-content/uploads/ERGOHAIR-GOOD-PRACTICE-EXAMPLES-2019-ENG.pdf>.

'A close shave' (video in Dutch, with English subtitles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fhi4cXg7gqM>.

'Healthy Hairdresser': <https://healthyhairdresser.nl/>.

EU-OSHA publications

OSHWiki:

[https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Occupational_Safety_and_Health_Administration_\(OSHA\)](https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Occupational_Safety_and_Health_Administration_(OSHA))

'Psychosocial risks and stress at work': <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress>.

E-facts 34 – Risk assessment for hairdressers: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/e-fact-34-risk-assessment-hairdressers>.

Musculoskeletal Health of Hairdressers: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/musculoskeletal-health-hairdressers/view>.

Occupational Health and Safety in the Hairdressing Sector (report on health risk in hairdressing): <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/occupational-health-and-safety-hairdressing-sector/view>.

OiRA

'How to carry out a risk assessment': <https://oiraproject.eu/en/how-carry-out-risk-assessment>.

'OiRA tools' (hairdressing sector): https://oiraproject.eu/en/oiratools?text=&field_sector_category%5B1192%5D=1192&sort=date.

COVID-19-related issues

'COVID-19: Back to the workplace – Adapting workplaces and protecting workers': https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/COVID-19:_Back_to_the_workplace_-_Adapting_workplaces_and_protecting_workers.

OiRA tool – COVID-19 revision: <https://oiraproject.eu/oiratools/eu/covid-19/covid-19-revision>.

'COVID-19 – Protection of the Health of Hairdressers': <https://coiffure.eu/social-dialogue/official-documents/covid-19-protection-health-hairdressers>.

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