



National Collaborating Centres  
for Public Health  
Centres de collaboration nationale  
en santé publique

## *Influence-in-action: National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health*

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The National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (NCCEH) contributes to maintaining a strong environmental health infrastructure in Canada, and responds to needs and gaps related to the increasingly complex sources of environment-related illness. A primary focus is to ensure that Canada has a multi-skilled, up-to-date workforce of public health inspectors (PHIs) and environmental health officers (EHOs).

### Key public health issues NCCEH addresses:

- **Contaminants and hazards** from infectious diseases, chemicals, radiation and noise;
- **Indoor and outdoor air quality**, including mould, radon and other contaminants;
- **Safe drinking and recreational water**, including small drinking water systems;
- **Natural and human-made environments** where we live, work and play;
- **Safe and healthy food systems** through food safety, hygiene and healthy eating;
- **Practices and procedures to prevent harm**, such as emergency preparedness and risk management; and
- **Changing climate** and its impact on human health.







## CASE STORY

# *Improving the safety of personal service establishments*

When Canadians want to have manicures and pedicures, get a tattoo or have their ears pierced, they visit personal service establishments (PSEs). Yet, until recently, there were few guiding resources for public health professionals to regulate this rapidly evolving industry, improve practice, and protect the public from health risks related to personal service procedures.

### PSE Practice and Infection Risk – a knowledge gap

The NCCEH responded to knowledge gaps in infection control and regulatory practices for PSEs by developing a [collection of foundational tools and resources](#) for front-line practitioners to increase their understanding of the risks associated with PSEs. These accessible resources include overviews of the health risks of different personal services, the importance of cleaning, disinfection and sterilization, and a comparison of guidelines and regulatory frameworks across Canada.



### What are PSEs?

PSEs are a wide range of businesses that offer aesthetic treatments and personal enhancement services such as:

- hair and nail salons;
- barber shops;
- tanning salons;
- electrolysis and waxing salons;
- tattoo and piercing parlours; and
- floatation tanks.

Since all of these services involves contact with the body, there is a potential risk of transmitting infection and disease to and among clients.

## NCCEH was a catalyst for addressing knowledge gaps in PSEs, encouraging new regulations

- The PSE resources were shared widely on the NCCEH website and at presentations and workshops. They became a springboard to foster the development of new regulations, guidelines, best practices, and programs across the country. With support from the Public Health Agency of Canada, NCCEH formed a national Personal Services Working Group to connect stakeholders, identify gaps and stimulate knowledge exchange. A major focus was to develop and share appropriate legislation, regulation, and inspection procedures.

## Impact on knowledge and practice

- Several NCCEH resources related to PSE practice are created in response to real-life inquiries from field officers (e.g. [field inquiries](#) on meat-packing pads as tattoo dressings, and adverse effects after medical, commercial, or self-administered colon cleansing procedures).
- Other NCCEH resources continue to be used as training tools for incoming Public Health Inspectors, and the regulation of PSEs has become more evidence-based. Front-line staff have noted that these user-friendly resources can be understood and acted upon by PSE owners and staff, even when there are language barriers.

- The NCCEH has been asked by several provinces and territories to review draft guidelines and two provinces are developing new policies to ensure that sterile water is used in all tattooing. In one jurisdiction, NCCEH's work has guided and helped to improve regulations for bagging tattoo machines. Tattoo providers now cover the tattoo device with a plastic bag to avoid spraying surfaces with blood, which could be transferred to another person.

## Sensory deprivation floatation tanks—a gap in PSE regulations

Salt-water floatation tanks are rapidly gaining in popularity in some parts of Canada as a calming, therapeutic treatment. However, since they fall between regulations for swimming pools and personal services, they are often unregulated, and their health risks are largely unknown.

The NCCEH has been responding to requests for guidelines and standards on floatation tanks from across Canada. The centre has reviewed current guidelines and assessed considerations for public health, and will continue to address this issue for front-line practitioners.



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*Strengthening public health across Canada: The influence of the National Collaborating Centres for Public Health* is available in its entirety in electronic format (PDF) at [www.nccph.ca](http://www.nccph.ca).

La version française est également disponible au [www.ccnsph.ca](http://www.ccnsph.ca) sous le titre *Appuyer la santé publique partout au Canada – l'influence des Centres de collaboration nationale en santé publique*.

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