

News release

HSE-E-03

21 May 2009

Luton Hairdressers Wave Goodbye to Bad Hand Days

A top hairdresser from **Luton** is supporting the Health & Safety Executive's 'Bad Hand Day' campaign to help prevent dermatitis striking hairdressers in the town.

A trial commissioned by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has revealed that hairdressers say 'yes' to reducing their very high chances of getting dermatitis and other uncomfortable skin conditions by wearing non-latex gloves during their work.

Owing to the amount of contact that hairdressers have with chemicals in hair products and water, hairdressers are 17 times more likely to suffer from work-related skin damage including dermatitis than any other group of workers.

This means that 70 per cent of hairdressers may suffer from skin damage at some point during their career. As dermatitis and other skin conditions can be painful as well as unsightly, sufferers are often forced to take time off work - with costs for the business and the hairdresser.

Now HSE is encouraging Britain's hairdressers to wave goodbye to work-related skin conditions by getting 'gloved-up'.

Local hairdresser Steve Hilliard, owner of **Steve Hilliard Hairdressing**, is supporting the HSE campaign.

Steve, whose salons in Barton Road, Luton, and Bedford Street, Ampthill, operate a strict policy regarding the use of gloves, said:

"A hairdresser's hands can be wet all day because you are shampooing, neutralising or rinsing off colours. There are so many chemicals in shampoos and conditioners, let alone perm solutions and semi-permanent and permanent dyes.

"We advise all staff at our Steve Hilliard Hairdressing salons how important it is to wear non-latex gloves to protect their hands. We also advise them to dry their hands regularly and use barrier creams when doing wet work. We encourage staff to take these simple measures because if hairdressers don't look after their hands it can bring a premature end to their career."

Dr Isla Fairhurst, project manager for the skin disease project at HSE, said:

"We wanted to see whether hairdressers could continue their work happily and practically while using non-latex gloves, which help prevent dermatitis and other skin conditions.

"We trialled long-sleeved gloves (30cm), which can be turned down to create a cuff to stop water running down inside the glove and onto the hand. The trial showed that the gloves are good for not snagging hair – a major concern for hairdressers."

The glove trials were carried out in 750 hair salons across 38 local authorities. They were organised on the back of HSE's well-known 'Bad Hand Day' campaign and in partnership with Local Authorities and Habia (the government appointed standards setting body of the hair and beauty industry). The campaign encourages more hairdressers to be proactive about preventing dermatitis by wearing non-latex gloves.

In the trial, each salon received a free supply of vinyl gloves and nitrile gloves and hairdressers were asked to use them for all tasks that involved skin contact with water and products - rinsing, shampooing, colouring, bleaching and straightening products.

After the trial, 80 per cent of participants said the gloves were comfortable to wear and 74 per cent of them said that they could handle clients' hair without snagging, dispelling the common myth that makes hairdressers about stylists' reluctant to use gloves.

The accompanying campaign pack offered information about how to prevent dermatitis, including good hand-care such as thoroughly drying hands, frequent skin checking and using moisturiser cream.

“As this is the beauty industry, it’s inevitable that hairdressers rely on having good looking and healthy hands to do their work professionally,” added Dr Fairhurst.

“We want to give more hairdressers the chance to try out these gloves, to find out how easy they are to use for themselves – and by logging onto www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing, they can also find out how easy it is to buy them. In the current economic climate, we hope that salon managers and stock buyers will see that providing these gloves and taking simple steps to improve health and safety is good business sense.”

Wendy Nixon, Health and Safety Manager at Habia, said:

"The feedback from hairdressers has been really positive and we are optimistic that more and more salons will see the benefits of using the longer length gloves in all wet work."

Notes to Editors

- For further information about the Bad Hand Day campaign please visit www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing/
- Full information and statistics about the glove trial can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing/glovetrial-analysis.htm
- A list of UK stockists that can supply the single use, all-round smooth, powder free, non-latex gloves, ideally around 300mm length (top to tail) can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing/stockists.htm or www.hbsa.uk.com/newproducts.html#Nitrile
- Two glove manufacturers, BM Polyco Ltd and Marigold Industrial provided gloves for trial. BM Polyco Ltd manufacture 300mm vinyl gloves and Marigold Industrial manufacture nitrile gloves.
- The 38 local authorities were selected from four regions: Scotland, Wales, the South West of England and London.

Public enquiries

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Steve Hilliard is available for interview. Any interview bids or photo requests should be made by calling Jeremy Owen, HSE press officer, on 01223 372783.

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