

Occupations and Workplaces

Hairdresser

On this page

[What does a hairdresser do?](#)

[What are some health and safety issues for hairdressers?](#)

[What are some preventive measures for a hairdresser?](#)

[What are some good general safe work practices?](#)

What does a hairdresser do?

Hairdressers, aestheticians, spa workers, and barbers all perform similar functions in a salon. They provide services to clients of all ages, backgrounds, and gender identities, adapting techniques and communication styles to meet individual needs. General tasks may include the following:

- Talk to clients about their requirements and provide advice on hair care.
- Shampoo, condition, and rinse hair.
- Cut hair using clippers, scissors, or razors.
- Provide services such as colouring, bleaching, applying treatment, permanent waving (with chemical solutions), straightening, and tinting.
 - Mix, measure, and apply chemical products according to manufacturer instructions.
 - Perform patch tests or strand tests when required.
 - Monitor processing times and assess hair or scalp condition during treatments.
- Store and label products properly.
- Set up and adjust equipment (chairs, sinks, dryers).
- Dry hair and style it using brushes, combs, curling or straightening (flat) irons, and other equipment.
- Clean and disinfect tools, equipment, and workstations between clients.
- Launder towels and capes.

- Operate a cash register and computer.
 - Perform reception duties, including answering telephone calls and scheduling appointments.
 - Recommend and sell retail hair care products and tools.
 - Maintain client records, including service history and known sensitivities or allergies.
 - Clean the salon, work areas, and equipment.
 - Supervise apprentices.
 - Participate in ongoing training to maintain licencing and stay current with techniques and safety practices.
 - Interact with customers who may be upset or angry (potential for harassment or bullying).
 - Be aware of customer actions while on the premises (be alert to potential issues or acts of theft).
-

What are some health and safety issues for hairdressers?

There are several potential health and safety hazards associated with a hairdresser's duties, including:

Biological hazards

- Exposure to blood or body fluids from nicks or cuts.
- Skin infections such as bacterial, fungal, or viral infections.
- Head lice transmission.
- Respiratory infectious diseases (colds, flu) through close contact.

Chemical hazards

- Exposure to chemicals such as:
 - Hair dyes and colourants - may contain ammonia, hydrogen peroxide, or other chemicals.
 - Bleaching agents with persulfates.
 - Permanent wave and straightening solutions.
 - Formaldehyde or formaldehyde-releasing products are used in some smoothing treatments.
 - Hair sprays and aerosols.
 - Shampoos, conditioners, and treatment products with fragrances.
 - Disinfectants and cleaning products.
- Inhalation of vapours, mists, or aerosols causing respiratory irritation.
- Inadequate ventilation.
- [Allergic contact dermatitis](#) or sensitization.

Ergonomic hazards

- [Standing](#) for long hours.
- [Musculoskeletal disorders](#).
- Working in awkward postures or performing repetitive tasks.
 - Repetitive hand, wrist, and arm movements.
 - Forceful gripping of tools.
 - Reaching across clients or over workstations.
- [Lifting](#) or carrying heavy loads.
- Inadequate workstation design or improperly adjusted chairs and sinks.
- [Fatigue](#) and other health issues from long hours of work.
- Inappropriate lighting levels, including glare or overly bright task lighting.

Physical hazards

- Noise due to equipment used, hair dryers, or people.
- Heat from blow dryers, curling irons, flat irons, and hot water.

Psychological hazards

- High workload, time pressure, back-to-back appointments

- Dealing with difficult, demanding, or dissatisfied clients.
- Risk of verbal harassment, verbal aggression, or inappropriate behaviour from clients.
- Long or irregular working hours, including evenings and weekends.
- Income instability.
- Limited control over scheduling or work pace.
- Workplace conflict or lack of supervisory support.
- [Stress](#).

Safety hazards

- Risk of cuts, bruises, or punctures from scissors, razors, clippers, or other sharp tools.
- Burns from hot styling tools, steam, or hot water.
- [Slips, trips and falls](#) from wet and untidy floors, spilled products, loose electrical cords, or hair on the floor.
- Electrical hazards from using powered equipment near water or damaged cords and outlets.
- Fire hazards associated with flammable products, electrical equipment, or improper storage of chemicals.

What are some preventive measures for a hairdresser?

Biological hazards

- Routine cleaning and disinfection of tools and frequently touched [surfaces](#).
- Proper hand hygiene - [Wash hands regularly, especially before and after working with each client](#).
- Wear gloves when appropriate.
- Use [routine practices](#) and treat all body substances such as blood as potentially infectious.
- Stay home and wear a mask when sick.

Chemical hazards

- Determine which products contain hazardous chemicals or ingredients and label them properly.
- Use a less harmful product where possible.

- Read manufacturer's instructions on how to use products safely, including hair products, cleaners, etc.
- Avoid contact with products that contain known cancer-causing ingredients or sensitizers such as certain hair dyes.
- Train workers in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and safe handling of hazardous products.
- Review the safety data sheet of the products before use.
- Safely store and dispose of products.
- Provide local exhaust ventilation where there is a risk of exposure to hazardous vapours.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, such as gloves and aprons or eye protection, when handling, mixing, or applying chemical treatments.
 - Make sure the equipment is made of the correct material for the chemical or product you are working with. There is no material that will protect against all types of chemicals or products.
 - Wash immediately with water and soap after any skin contact with chemicals or products.

Ergonomic hazards

- Design the salon ergonomically:
 - Provide workbenches, reception desks, washbasins (for tasks such as cutting, styling, shampooing, etc.) at the right height, and adjustable stools and [chairs](#) for sitting.
 - Rearrange the work area so that the task, materials (shampoos, conditioners, dyes, etc.), equipment (scissors, blow-dryers, etc.) and controls are within easy reach and do not require stretching or twisting.
- Position clients at an appropriate height.
- Provide training on how to adjust the workstation.
- Take regular rest breaks to stretch and change posture.
- Avoid holding arms above shoulder height for extended periods.
- Use anti-fatigue mats.
- Rotate job functions to prevent overuse injuries.
- Rotate washing and basin duty (to avoid prolonged contact with water).
- Purchase scissors, blow-dryers, styling rods and rollers, gloves, etc., which are easy and safe to use.

- Store frequently used heavy objects and materials between knee and shoulder height.
- Wear supportive footwear.
- Shift weight regularly while standing.
- Ensure adequate, evenly distributed lighting and minimize glare and harsh reflections.

Physical hazards

- Purchase equipment that is quieter.
- Install sound enclosures or use noise-reducing surfaces (sound-dampening materials).
- Ensure temperature regulators are used on hot water heaters so they do not exceed safe temperatures set out in the building code (usually around 49 degrees Celsius or 120 degrees Fahrenheit).

Psychological hazards

- Design jobs to allow reasonable workloads and adequate rest breaks.
- Develop and enforce policies addressing workplace harassment and violence.
- Treat all workers fairly and respectfully.
- Encourage open communication and worker participation in decision-making.
- Promote positive mental health and supportive workplace culture.
- Provide access to [Employee Assistance Programs](#) or other support programs where available.

Safety hazards

- Inspect tools and equipment to make sure they are in good condition. Remove damaged tools from service.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions for using equipment, tools, and appliances safely.
- Follow safe storage practices for chemicals and aerosols.
- Make sure all sharp equipment is disposed of safely.
- Clean the floor frequently, and always as soon as there is a spill.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment after each use.
- Wear comfortable shoes with non-skid soles.
- Maintain proper lighting levels.
- Follow electrical safety measures. Ensure the electrical panel and outlets are rated for the equipment used.

- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) where required.
 - Secure and manage electrical cords to prevent tripping. Do not overload outlets or use extension cords.
 - Allow heated tools to cool before storage.
 - Keep flammable products away from heat sources.
 - Train workers on fire safety.
 - Ensure fire extinguishers are accessible and workers are trained in emergency procedures.
 - Maintain a first-aid kit and provide opportunities for first aid training.
-

What are some good general safe work practices?

- Follow safety procedures for:
 - Hair products, equipment and tools.
 - [Electrical safety](#).
 - [Fire safety](#), including [fire extinguishers](#).
 - [Manual material handling and safe](#) lifting practices.
 - [Workplace harassment and violence prevention](#).
 - [Good hygiene practices](#).
- Practice safe [lifting techniques](#).
- Practice good [housekeeping](#) procedures.
- Keep floors clean and dry to prevent slips and falls.
- Wear supportive, non-slip footwear.
- Use, maintain and store [personal protective equipment](#) as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Learn about chemical hazards, [WHMIS](#) and [Safety Data Sheets \(SDSs\)](#)
- Know how to clean equipment and tools properly.
- Ensure adequate ventilation when using chemical products.
- Maintain good posture and adjust workstations for each client.
- Take regular breaks and vary tasks where possible.
- Know [first aid](#).

- Participate in health and safety training and follow workplace policies and procedures.
 - Consider the increased risk of hazards for [pregnant workers](#) and adjust work when needed.
 - Know how to [report hazards](#) to your employer.
 - Know how to [report injuries](#) to your employer and the Workers' Compensation Board.
-

Fact sheet last revised: 2026-07-31

Disclaimer

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.