

Environmental Health Fact Sheet Children's Face Painting

INTRODUCTION

Face painting is a popular fund raising activity at agricultural shows, fetes, shopping centres and the like. The NSW Health Department would like parents and operators to be aware of the possible health risks involved.

GENERAL

It is recognised that there are some risks associated with the procedure unless adequate hygiene practices are observed. Face painting could lead to the spread of skin infections, aggravate skin disorders and allergies.

PROBLEMS

There is generally no attempt to clean children's faces before applying paint and often there is no running water available for face washing or cleaning of utensils, brushes and applicators.

Paint is usually mixed in a common pot, with the same brushes and applicators used on all customers. These brushes and applicators constantly come into contact with the mucus membranes of the nasal areas, eyes and lips of successive children. These actions can readily lead to the transmission of infections.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES

To minimise the likely spread of infections the following precautions should be observed:

- faces to be painted should be clean;
- paint applicators and brushes should ideally be single use or should be cleaned after each child using detergent and fresh water;
- paint applicators and brushes should not be stored, washed or rinsed in a standing bucket or jar of stored water;
- brushes and applicators should be washed or rinsed under running water;
- sufficient paint should be mixed in a container sufficient for just each child and the container then immediately washed using clean water after each child;
- adequate soap and water should be available for the face painting artist;
- children with obvious face rashes should be excluded.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information and advice contact the Environmental Health section of the local council or Area Health Service Public Health Unit.