

american spa

Spa Cleanliness: A Comprehensive Case Study Goes Beyond the Surface

November 17, 2015



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Perfect location. Amazing facility. The latest equipment. Talented staff. Sounds like a spa that is on the road to success. But, what lies beneath (or on top of) the surface? Cleanliness, or the lack thereof, can make or break a spa's reputation and lead to serious health risks. With 360,000 people working in nearly 21,000 spas in the United States, the quality of sanitation training, certification, and protocol is paramount. There are current acceptable procedures and practices by spas concerning the cleanliness of the equipment and tools used in providing spa services.

I was part of a comprehensive experience in spa sanitation through 10 months of on-site partnering with a renowned academic clinic/hospital campus in the Midwest. This collaborative work between the facility and Spa & Club Ideations, LLC was conducted when launching the first multi-services spa within this unprecedented setting.

Witnessing “Firsts” in the Spa Industry

Challenges met during this process included several that were deemed “firsts” in the spa industry. These included rigorous requirements in sterilization, infection control, product selection, service standards, and staffing.

The standards were established by The Joint Commission overseeing U.S. hospital accreditation, which is an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits and certifies more than 20,500 health care organizations and programs. This organization is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects a commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

Sanitizing, Disinfecting, and Using Autoclaves

Cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization of esthetic, massage and nail tools, equipment, massage tables, and all additional implements used in spa industry treatments and services can be improved by executing multiple procedure steps. These include, cleaning with soap and water, using a cue-tip to remove any debris on tools, the use of EPA-registered hospital-grade disinfectants (where applicable), and the use of autoclaves on all metal tools.

Additionally, the utilization of one-time use implements and one-time use guest amenities can also assist in achieving this objective. This goal can be met in many cases with comparable costs to the facility.

Standards and Procedures

Set proper standards and procedures, and establish protocols for cleaning of all equipment, massage and facial tables, tools, and implements. Also, schedule initial and on-going training of all staff members and ensure that the standards and protocols are followed consistently.

Make sure to post the cleaning standards steps in all treatment rooms, prep rooms, and dispensaries. Lastly, document cleaning dates and times for steamers used in esthetic rooms, and post in the treatment rooms for staff to sign when completed.

One-Time Use Implements and Amenities

I recommend giving guests some of the implements used in their treatment. This is not only a great sanitizing measure; it also makes guests feel special to leave with a tool. These include:

- Reasonably priced mask and fan brushes and sponges when used on guests in facials; these items cannot be thoroughly sanitized.
- Disposable buffers, nail files, and orangewood sticks from nail services.
- Using pre-packaged guest amenities in locker room areas eliminates guests reaching into open containers with possibly uncleaned hands for items such as cotton swabs and cotton balls.

Finally, let your guests know of the extra steps your spa team takes by placing the information in your marketing and public relations materials.

In conclusion, having the knowledge and ability to make positive changes towards a cleaner spa environment for the guests and staff is both a compelling and rewarding endeavor. With physicians increasingly recognizing the value of massage, meditation, physical activity, and relaxation for their patients, the opportunities for spas to develop ongoing referral relationships can be established.

American Spa Professional Network



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