To assess proper function, users should test automated cleaning equipment (e.g., ultrasonic cleaners, instrument washers, thermal disinfectors) upon initial installation, weekly during routine use, after major repairs. This should be included as a component of your instrument operating and maintenance instructions, including instrument loading procedures, which is critical to the success of the cleaning process.

**Select References**

**Monitoring Automated Cleaning Equipment**

- To assess proper function, users should test automated cleaning equipment (e.g., ultrasonic cleaners, instrument washers, thermal disinfectors) upon initial installation, weekly during routine use, and after major repairs. This should be included as a component of your instrument processing quality assurance program. Commercially-available tests are available to evaluate important variables. These tests do not replace the requirement to visually inspect instruments after cleaning.
- Continue to follow the cleaning equipment manufacturer operating and maintenance instructions, including instrument loading procedures, which is critical to the success of the cleaning process.

**Immediate-Use Sterilization**

Flash sterilization is a modification of conventional steam sterilization (either gravity, prevacuum, or steam-flush pressure-pulse) in which the flushed item is placed in an open tray or is placed in a specially designed, covered, rigid container to allow for rapid penetration of steam.

Flash sterilization should not be used for reasons of convenience, as an alternative to purchasing additional instrument sets, or to save time.


To provide clarification on the process, new terminology (i.e., immediate-use sterilization) was introduced by the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation in 2011; the statement doesn’t include any new requirements or changes to the process.


[Information about the Sterilization of Unwrapped Dental Instruments:

CDC. Guidelines for infection control in dental health-care settings – 2003. MMWR 2003; 52(No. RR-17).]
Select Recommendations from the CDC Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings—2003

Dental Handpieces & Other Devices Attached to Air & Waterlines

www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/guidelines/index.htm

1. Clean and heat-sterilize handpieces and other intraoral instruments that can be removed from the air and waterlines of dental units between patients (IB, IC) (2,246,275,356,357,360,407).
2. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for cleaning, lubrication, and sterilization of handpieces and other intraoral instruments that can be removed from the air and waterlines of dental units (IB) (367–363).
3. Do not surface-disinfect, use liquid chemical sterilants, or ethylene oxide on handpieces and other intraoral instruments that can be removed from the air and waterlines of dental units (IC) (2,246,250,275).

Dental Handpiece IC Resources

- **High- and Low-Speed Handpieces**
- **Electric Handpieces**
- **Surgical Handpieces & Sterile Irrigation Products**
  - Low-Speed Handpiece Sterilization
- **General Information**

Event-Related Packaging/Shelf-Life

Select References


References for Managing Instrument Processing Mishaps


Biological Indicators

Select References: Rapid Readout Biological Indicators


Positive “Spore Tests”

Positive Biological Indicators*

1. Do not use the sterilizer until it has been inspected or repaired or the exact reason for the positive test has been determined.
2. Recall, to the extent possible, and reprocess all items processed since the last negative spore test.
3. Before placing the sterilizer back in service, rechallenge the sterilizer with biological indicator tests in three consecutive empty chamber sterilization cycles (or in three consecutive fully loaded chamber sterilization cycles if using a tabletop sterilizer) after the cause of the sterilizer failure has been determined and corrected.

*In addition to local policies


Select Other References


References for Managing Instrument Processing Mishaps