

## Sample Instrument Processing (Sterilization) Protocol

A written protocol to comply with the Dental Board of California infection control regulations.

**Instructions:** Use this sample form and follow the instructions below to create your practice's written sterilization protocol. The Dental Board of California establishes minimum requirements for instrument processing and sterilization in its infection control regulations. The DBC requirements are included below. For a discussion of instrument processing and sterilization recommendations, refer to the CDC Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities, 2008 at [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/guidelines/Disinfection\\_Nov\\_2008.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/guidelines/Disinfection_Nov_2008.pdf).

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### PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

All DHCP shall wear surgical facemasks in combination with either chin length plastic face shields or protective eyewear whenever there is potential for aerosol spray, splashing or spattering of the following: droplet nuclei, blood, chemical or germicidal agents or OPIM. Chemical-resistant utility gloves and appropriate, task specific PPE shall be worn when handling hazardous chemicals.

Protective attire shall be worn for disinfection, sterilization, and housekeeping procedures involving the use of germicides or handling contaminated items. All DHCP shall wear reusable or disposable protective attire whenever there is a potential for aerosol spray, splashing or spattering of blood, OPIM, or chemicals and germicidal agents.

When processing contaminated sharp instruments, needles and devices, DHCP shall wear heavy-duty utility gloves to prevent puncture wounds.

*Describe the location in the office where staff can obtain personal protective equipment necessary for processing instruments.*

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### IN THE OPERATORY TO THE STERILIZATION AREA

Single use disposable items such as prophylaxis angles, prophylaxis cups and brushes, tips for high-speed evacuators, saliva ejectors, air/water syringe tips, and gloves shall be used for one patient only and discarded.

Needles shall be recapped only by using the scoop technique or a protective device. Needles shall not be bent or broken for the purpose of disposal. Disposable needles, syringes, scalpel blades, or other sharp items and instruments shall be placed into sharps containers for disposal as close as possible to the point of use according to all applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

*Describe how contaminated instruments are separated, then transported from operatory to the sterilization area (must be done safely; transport instruments using a covered tray or placed in cassettes).*

*List other instruments and items that are to be disposed after single use.*

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### PREPARING THE INSTRUMENTS/ITEMS FOR STERILIZATION OR DISINFECTION

All germicides must be used in accordance with intended use and label instructions.

Cleaning must precede any disinfection or sterilization process. Products used to clean items or surfaces prior to disinfection procedures shall be used according to all label instructions.

*Describe how instruments are soaked/cleaned/wrapped before sterilization.*

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## **STERILIZATION AND DISINFECTION**

Critical instruments, items and devices shall be discarded or pre-cleaned, packaged or wrapped and sterilized after each use. Methods of sterilization shall include steam under pressure (autoclaving), chemical vapor, and dry heat. If a critical item is heat-sensitive, it shall, at a minimum, be processed with high-level disinfection and packaged or wrapped upon completion of the disinfection process.

Semi-critical instruments, items, and devices shall be pre-cleaned, packaged or wrapped and sterilized after each use. Methods of sterilization include steam under pressure (autoclaving), chemical vapor and dry heat. If a semi-critical item is heat sensitive, it shall, at minimum, be processed with high level disinfection and packaged or wrapped upon completion of the disinfection process.

All high-speed dental hand pieces, low-speed hand pieces, rotary components, and dental unit attachments such as reusable air/water syringe tips and ultrasonic scaler tips, shall be packaged, labeled and heat-sterilized in a manner consistent with the same sterilization practices as a semi-critical item.

Non-critical surfaces and patient care items shall be cleaned and disinfected with a California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA)-registered hospital disinfectant (low-level disinfectant) labeled effective against HBV and HIV. When the item is visibly contaminated with blood or OPIM, a Cal/EPA-registered hospital intermediate-level disinfectant with a tuberculocidal claim shall be used.

All intraoral items such as impressions, bite registrations, prosthetic and orthodontic appliances shall be cleaned and disinfected with an intermediate-level disinfectant before manipulation in the laboratory and before placement in the patient's mouth. Such items shall be thoroughly rinsed prior to placement in the patient's mouth.

Devices used to polish, trim, or adjust contaminated intraoral devices shall be disinfected or sterilized, properly packaged or wrapped and labeled with the date and the specific sterilizer used if more than one sterilizer is utilized in the facility.

Proper functioning of the sterilization cycle of all sterilization devices shall be verified at least weekly through the use of a biological indicator (such as a spore test). Test results shall be documented and maintained for 12 months.

*Describe how to place instrument packages in the sterilizer and how to operate the sterilizer. Describe where to place spore test strip.*

*Note if more than one sterilizer is used and, if so, any special instructions for the order of use.*

*If cold sterilization is used, list the instruments sterilized this way, and the process for preparing and changing the cold sterile solution. Describe how instruments are handled in the cold sterilization process (soaking/cleaning/rinsing/drying/wrapping/storage).*

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**INSTRUMENT STORAGE**

These packages or containers shall remain sealed and shall be stored in a manner so as to prevent contamination, and shall be labeled with the date of sterilization and the specific sterilizer used if more than one sterilizer is utilized in the facility.

If packaging is compromised, the instruments shall be recleaned, packaged in a new wrap, and sterilized again. Sterilized items will be stored in a manner so as to prevent contamination.

*Describe where instrument packages are stored after sterilization or disinfection.*

Protocol implementation date:	Protocol reviewed on:		
Protocol replaced on:			

*If changes are made to the protocol, replace this form. Retain old protocols for 5 years after last date of use.*