

INSTRUMENT CLEANING AND STERILIZATION – TEMPLATE CHECKLIST

INSTRUMENT CLEANING

1. Perform hand hygiene and don appropriate personal protective equipment.
2. Disassemble instruments as required by manufacturer instructions
3. Soak instruments in an enzymatic solution according to manufacturer's instructions (e.g., dilution and soak time) until visible soil appears dissolved and removed.
4. Manually clean instruments with a brush underwater to prevent splash or spray of contaminated liquid, paying particular attention to hinges and serrations.
5. Rinse instruments thoroughly.
6. Dry with a disposable, lint-free cleaning cloth.
7. Inspect instruments to ensure they are clean and free from damage (e.g., rust, pitting).
8. Lubricate as needed (according to manufacturer's instructions), dry with a disposable lint-free towel and package immediately.

PACKAGING (POUCHES OR WRAPS)

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. Select appropriately sized pouch or wrap ensuring that the package type is approved for use with your autoclave and instruments.
3. Place instrument(s) into packaging, ensuring that each instrument is in the open position and that at time of use the package can be opened in a way that maintains instrument sterility.
4. Insert a class 4 or 5 chemical indicator into each package.
5. If using a pouch, ensure that it has an external chemical indicator (square that changes colour), or use autoclave tape as external chemical indicator.
6. Close the package according to instructions (e.g., seal the pouch with the self-sealing flap or a heat sealer; fold and tape the wrap).
7. Using a felt-tipped marker, label the package on the label area with package content, date of sterilization, initials and load number.
8. Keep packages in a clean area until ready to sterilize.

LOADING THE AUTOCLAVE

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. For the first load of the day of each type of cycle (e.g., pouches, unwrapped instruments), place a biological indicator (BI) in the centre of the autoclave at the lowest point, packaged in the same way as your instruments (i.e. pouch or wrap).
3. Place packages into sterilizer, ensuring no contact or overlap between them or with the walls of the autoclave. If using pouches, paper side should face down if loaded flat, or if loaded in a vertical rack paper sides should face plastic sides.
4. Select the appropriate cycle. Refer to your autoclave manual for details; generally, for instruments packaged in pouches or wraps select the "wrapped instrument" setting.
5. In the log, document the details about the load and BI, if applicable.

UNLOADING THE AUTOCLAVE

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. Remove all packages from sterilizer once cooled. Inspect packaging for integrity, external and internal indicators, and any sign of water/condensation.
3. Confirm on the physical indicator (printout or device in autoclave's USB port) that the cycle reached the appropriate temperature and pressure and maintained them for adequate time. For example, pouches in a Ritter Midmark autoclave require 270°F (132°C) and 27.1 psi (186 kPa) for five minutes.
4. Document time of cycle, temperature and pressure in the logbook. Initial the printout (if applicable) and store with the logbook.
5. If applicable, carefully remove the BI within 15 minutes of the cycle end, activate, and incubate the BI. At the same time, activate and incubate another biological indicator that was not autoclaved for the "control."
6. After the required time has passed (commonly 48 hours, depending on the biological indicator you are using), check the BI and control. To pass, the BI should be negative (no growth) and the control should be positive (growth).
7. If the internal and external chemical indicators and physical indicators (printout or USB data) all pass, instruments can be released for use once the biological indicator results are available and appropriate.
8. Document BI results and item release time in the log book.
9. If any of the indicators fail, do not use the instruments and refer to your practice's protocol/checklist about managing a failed autoclave cycle; call the AOM if instruments have been used where a BI failed.

INSTRUMENT STORAGE AND USE

1. Keep sterile instrument packs clean, dry and intact until use.
2. If any of the indicators have not passed or the instrument pouch appears punctured, wet or damaged by water, the instruments are not sterile and should not be used. Refer to the *Midwifery Guide to Reprocessing* for an algorithm on managing autoclave failures.
3. If applicable, reassemble instruments at time of use.