

SAMPLE

Autoclaving Instruments in Peel Pack Pouches

PURPOSE: To provide guidelines for packaging and maintaining instruments in peel pack pouches.

POLICY: All autoclaved instruments will be packaged and maintained appropriately.

PROCEDURE:

1. Thoroughly clean, rinse, and dry all instruments. Each instrument is inspected carefully for the presence of dried blood or other debris.
2. Place instruments in the autoclave pouch; select size per the instrument being packaged. Do not overfill the pouch with instruments or cause stress to the package.
 - a. All jointed instruments should be open and/or unlocked and disassembled, if instrument requires assembly.
 - b. Place sharp points of scissors toward the plastic side and the handles toward the top of the pack.
 - c. Wrap points with gauze to prevent puncturing of the pouch, which can cause contamination of the instrument.
3. Remove as much air as possible before sealing the pouch, as air acts as a barrier to heat and moisture and may cause rupturing of packages.
4. Whenever moisture is present after the drying and cooling period, the pack must be reprocessed.
5. Label the package with the date of sterilization, load run identification information, and general contents (e.g. suture set). Each item in a sterile package need not be listed on the label if a master list of package contents is available elsewhere on site.
6. When loading packed instruments into the autoclave, arrange peel pack pouches so that materials that are alike are touching (example: Plastic to plastic). This ensures penetration of sterilants, air and/or moisture.
7. Process as prescribed per operational instructions for specific autoclave type.
8. After removal of packs from autoclave, place with plastic side down until packs are cool.
9. Sterilized articles should be carefully handled and stored in a manner that minimizes stress and pressure. Storage for sterilized packages must be clean, dry and separated from non-sterile items by a functional barrier (e.g., shelf, cabinet door, drawer).

10. All sterilized packages will be inspected routinely for damage. In addition, the integrity of the package will always be checked prior to use. Maintenance of sterility is event related, not time related. Sterilized items are considered sterile until used, unless an event causes contamination. However, sterilized items are not considered sterile if the package is opened, wet/moist, discolored or damaged. If any of these conditions exist, the items in the package will be removed from the sterile package storage area and then re-autoclaved.

11. Spore testing will be done at least monthly unless otherwise stated in manufacturer's guidelines, which are kept on site. Spore testing will be done to determine the efficacy of the sterilizing process by either Attest biological testing in office or contracting a laboratory to do spore testing.

References:

AORN – Standards and Recommended Practices for Perioperative Nursing, 1993