


Back to Basics: Instrument Cleaning 1.0 www.aornjournal.org/content/cme

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Purpose/Goal

To provide the learner with knowledge of best practices related to surgical instrument cleaning.

Objectives

1. Discuss common areas of concern that relate to perioperative best practices.
2. Discuss best practices that could enhance safety in the perioperative area.
3. Describe the implementation of evidence-based practice in relation to perioperative nursing care.

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Lisa Spruce, DNP, RN, CNS-CP, CNOR, ACNS, ACNP, FAAN, has no declared affiliation that could be perceived as posing a potential conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

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ABSTRACT

Adequately cleaning and processing surgical instruments may be challenging for perioperative team members; however, the cleaning and processing of instruments are critical steps in making instruments safe to use on patients and achieving an appropriately safe OR environment. Instruments that are cleaned properly have had organic debris and soil removed, rendering them ready for sterilization or disinfection. This Back to Basics article covers the basic steps and considerations for cleaning and processing instruments before sterilization. *AORN J* 105 (March 2017) 292-299. © AORN, Inc, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aorn.2017.01.001>

Key words: *surgical instruments, instrument cleaning, instrument processing, biofilm, ultrasonic cleaner.*

Proper instrument cleaning is an essential step when processing surgical instruments to ensure patient safety. Consider the following scenario: Mrs G is a 65-year-old patient admitted to an outpatient surgery center for an orthopedic surgical procedure. During her procedure, the surgical technologist prepares the drill before use and notices that there are bone fragments in the drill bit from another patient. The drill bit had already touched other instruments that the surgeon used during Mrs G's procedure. The instrument had not been properly cleaned, and Mrs G has been exposed to potentially infectious material. The nurse takes her to the postanesthesia care unit where she is recovering without problems. She is sitting up and waiting to see the surgeon. The surgeon notifies Mrs G of the instrument contamination. Mrs G becomes upset that she may be at risk of developing a surgical site infection. This scenario illustrates the importance of surgical instrument cleaning before sterilization as an essential step that requires careful execution.

This Back to Basics article addresses instrument precleaning and cleaning as the first steps in ensuring that surgical instruments are safe and ready to use on patients. This article does not address sterilization, loaned instruments, evaluating or selecting instruments, prions, or personal protective

equipment. For evidence-based guidance on these topics, see AORN's "Guideline for sterilization"¹ and the "Guideline for cleaning and care of surgical instruments."²

HOW-TO GUIDE

Before beginning any process for cleaning surgical instruments, personnel should consult the instrument manufacturer's instructions for use (IFU), which should be on-site and available in every facility.² Manufacturers of reusable instruments and devices cleared by the US Food and Drug Administration provide validated cleaning and decontamination instructions and instructions on device processing between uses.² Items cannot be assumed to be clean, decontaminated, or sterile unless the manufacturer's IFU are derived from validation testing and the user has followed those instructions.² Personnel should review the written IFU to determine the requirements for cleaning and processing the instruments and to make sure the required materials for cleaning are available at the facility.² Examples of such requirements are the type of water for cleansing; instrument air; cleaning equipment; accessories; cleaning agents; lubricants; and procedures for handling, cleaning, disinfecting, testing, packaging, and sterilizing.³ Sterile-processing personnel should review these instructions periodically to make sure the

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