

1 Purpose

This Fact Sheet explains safe practices, minimum standards, and infection control procedures and incorporates “best practice” information for owners/operators of skin penetration premises. The risk of transmission of infection can be minimised by ensuring that premises are maintained in a clean and hygienic manner, “Standard Precautions” are used, effective sterilisation of equipment is achieved and waste is disposed of correctly. .

Unsafe or unhygienic procedures may affect the health of both the client and the operator. Where procedures involving skin penetration are not managed correctly, they may transmit bacterial, fungal and viral infection, including HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. The aims are to minimise the risk of transmission of micro-organisms, promote safe work environments, and promote public awareness of safe working practices and procedures and to be user friendly.

2 Sterilisation

The process of rendering objects free from all forms of life including spores

All equipment used to penetrate the skin must be sterile. Where re-useable equipment is used it must be cleaned and sterilised prior to re-use, in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. All staff should be trained on correct sterilisation procedures. Re-useable equipment must be capable of being sterilised by the method chosen.

The use of pre-sterilised single use equipment is recommended. Single use items must never be re-used; they must be disposed of immediately after use. The recommended method for sterilisation of equipment is autoclaving.

Sterilisation depends on the following factors –

- Temperature – the correct temperature must be maintained for the specified time;
- Cleanliness – the equipment must be clean to enable sterilisation;
- Circulation – the chamber must be designed to allow circulation around the equipment; and
- Moisture – steam must be used in the sterilisation process.

Temperature, Pressure and Holding Times for Autoclave Sterilisation

Minimum Temperature °C	Pressure kPa	Pressure Psi	Holding Time (Minutes)
121	103	15	15
126	138	20	10
132	186	27	4
134	206	30	3

Autoclaves and other sterilising equipment must be used and maintained according to manufacturer’s instructions. The following methods do not sterilise equipment and must **not** be used –

- Boiling, pasteurisation, wiping or soaking with disinfectant, exposure to ultraviolet light, pressure cookers, dishwashers and microwave ovens.

Sanitisation is **NOT** the same as sterilisation.

3 Autoclave sterilisation

The operator/manager should do the following:

- Train and instruct all people responsible for operating the autoclave in its correct use;
- Display instructions on how to package equipment to be autoclaved;
- Display operating instructions for the autoclave next to the machine;
- Ensure the autoclave is operating properly by checking the correct temperature, pressure and holding times are achieved by using chemical and biological indicators; and
- Ensure the manufacturer, their agent or a qualified service technician services the autoclave. Keep service records on site.

4 Preparation of equipment for autoclaving

Equipment must be prepared for autoclaving by –

- Ensuring the equipment can be sterilised by autoclaving;
- Ensuring equipment is cleaned and packed in autoclavable bags. This protects it from becoming soiled after sterilising and enables storage in a sterile condition;
- Equipment must be dry before removal from the autoclave;
- Include chemical indicators on the autoclave bag to indicate processing;
- Discard or reprocess equipment which is found with its packaging damaged, has broken seals, is wet or has been dropped as the contents may no longer be sterile; and
- Autoclaved equipment must be used immediately on removal from its packaging.

Where an autoclave is used to process equipment on site the following information should be recorded at the completion of each batch processed:

- Date;
- Maximum pressure achieved;
- Time held at maximum pressure and temperature;
- Faults with cycle, if any; and
- Number of items processed

5 Off-site sterilisation

All equipment that is sterilised off-site must have records kept on the following –

- The location of premises where sterilisation was completed;
- The date of sterilisation;
- Method of sterilisation used; and
- Operator who performed sterilisation

All sterilised equipment must be transported in a manner that ensures the sterile items remain sterile. Any items with damaged packaging or that have become damp or moist must be discarded. All sterile equipment must be used immediately on removal from its packaging.

Note *This code is based on the requirements of the Public Health Regulation 1991 and the Skin Penetration Guidelines prepared by the NSW Health Department and should be read in conjunction with those documents.*

Disclaimers

This Fact Sheet was believed to be correct at the date of its approval.

This Fact Sheet is for general information purposes only.
