

Cleaning Instruments

What is cleaning?

- Cleaning is the process of removing dirt and debris left on the surface of instruments and equipment, allowing the disinfectant or sterilant to work effectively.
- **Cleaning must occur prior to disinfection or sterilization.**
- Cleaning involves the use of detergent/enzymatic cleaner, water and friction or can involve the use of an ultrasonic cleaner.

You do not have to see blood or bodily fluids on instruments for an infection to occur.

The Cleaning Process:

1. Designated reprocessing sink must be used for cleaning of all reusable instruments and cannot be located in a room with a toilet. Also, handwash sinks cannot be used to clean instruments.
2. Ensure sink is cleaned and disinfected before using.
3. Pre-soak items immediately after use in a basin of water (with or without detergent).
4. Thick rubber gloves should be used to protect your hands.
5. Take instruments apart (if applicable) and rinse under warm running water. Hot water will bind proteins to instruments which makes them more difficult to remove.
6. Add warm water and detergent to the sink. Keep the instruments visible to avoid puncturing your hands.
7. Clean with a small dedicated, cleaning brush using a scrubbing motion. Scrub below the water surface to prevent splashing, especially into the eyes. Ultrasonic cleaners may be used but must be operated with the lid on to prevent aerosolization.
8. Inspect instruments to ensure removal of all visible organic matter.
9. Drain dirty water. Thoroughly rinse each instrument with clean warm running water.
10. Air dry or use a clean lint-free cloth or clean, soft absorbent towel. Ensure instruments are completely dry before storing to prevent a film being left on the surface (biofilm), which contains microorganisms.
11. Store in a clean, covered container until the instruments can be disinfected or sterilized.
12. Remove rubber gloves. Wash, rinse and hang gloves to dry. Cleaned rubber gloves may be re-used as long as there are no punctures or tears.
13. Wash hands thoroughly using liquid soap and warm water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Durham Health Connection Line

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
durham.ca/KnowBeforeYouGo



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This information is available in accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.
Source: Guide to Infection Prevention and Control in Personal Service Settings, Public Health Ontario, July 2019.