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Flash Sterilization For Unwrapped Instruments

by Douglas J. Racich, DDS
North Bay Bioscience, LLC

An unwrapped cycle (*flash sterilization*) is a method for sterilizing unwrapped patient-care items for immediate use. With more and more sterilizers equipped to run this type of cycle, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines offer recommendations for the sterilization of unwrapped instruments.

According to the CDC, unwrapped sterilization should be used only when:

- 1) Thorough cleaning and drying of instruments precedes the unwrapped sterilization cycle.
- 2) Mechanical monitors are checked (temperature and pressure gauges) and chemical indicators are used for each cycle.
- 3) Care is taken to avoid thermal injury to personnel or patients.
- 4) Items are transported aseptically to the point of use to maintain sterility.

Note: Because all implantable devices should be quarantined after sterilization until the results of biological monitoring are known, unwrapped or flash sterilization of implantable items is not recommended.



Douglas J. Racich, DDS, is a general dentist with North Bay Bioscience, LLC.

North Bay is one of the largest sterilizer monitoring services in the country and continues to partner with Ameritas to offer its dental providers discounts on sterilizer monitoring products and services.

Contact Dr. Racich by phone at 1-800-289-7786 or by email at dracich@nbbs.com.

The lack of packaging with any flash sterilization cycle is a concern. Without packaging there are no indicators present to avoid processing errors and the operator would have to rely on mechanical indicators alone to determine if proper sterilization conditions had occurred. Use of chemical indicators with each cycle addresses both concerns.

Chemical indicators show that adequate parameters were achieved inside the chamber. In addition, staff members who remove instruments from the sterilizer can check the chemical indicator to ensure items were indeed processed, eliminating the chance of any staff members reusing unsterilized instruments.

While the CDC specifically uses the words chemical indicator, one of the best choices for flash sterilization would be a chemical integrator. Chemical integrators are more sophisticated than chemical indicators. They change color when all critical parameters are met (temperature, time and steam saturation).

As shown in the diagram, a “wicking” type of integrator provides information based on the distance the chemical travels. This added information can be useful in determining problems and alerting staff to possible processing errors.



Chemical movement

For CDC guidelines, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/RR/RR5217.pdf>.

National Children’s Dental Health Month [February]

On February 1, Ameritas home office group division associates began celebrating National Children’s Dental Health Month. Associates received floss and a toothbrush with a colorful note card reminding them of the special job they do each day — helping individuals and families receive the quality dental care they deserve. We believe good oral health reflects a person’s overall health, and we’re glad to help!

READERS ARE INVITED
to submit dental-related articles to

Lori McPherson Louch at lmcpersonlouch@ameritas.com.

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Toothprints® Combine Community Service & Practice Building

Why Toothprints? Historically, X-rays and dental restorations have been used to identify missing children who are recovered, but progress in the fight against tooth decay has resulted in a growing numbers of kids with no cavities and few dental records. And for most kids and teens, fingerprint records and ID materials don’t exist.

Dental professionals are in a unique position to offer a valuable public service that can assist authorities in tracking a missing child or making a positive identification. It was a pediatric dentist, in fact, who developed Toothprints bite impressions as a way of safeguarding his own child and other young patients.

Like fingerprints, dental imprints are unique to every person, so bite impressions can serve as an accurate method of identification. Patients bite into arch-shaped thermoplastic wafers that record individual tooth characteristics, tooth position within the arch, and the upper to lower jaw relationship. The wafer hardens into a reliable long-term record of the patient’s dentition that can be used for identification. It’s comfortable, inexpensive and fast — taking only a few minutes. And parents keep the print at home for confidentiality and quick access.

Sealed properly in zippered plastic bags, Toothprints also preserves salivary DNA that can be used to identify recovered children. The scent from the saliva captured by an unrinsed print can even be used for tracking by search and rescue dogs.

A BIG “THANK YOU” TO SOUTHWEST DENTAL GROUP for sending us the story of Toothprints and how they use the product in their practice:

“We often visit the valley schools and bring goody bags for the students that include information about Southwest Dental Group, toothbrush, floss, a coupon for Mom and Dad for a discount on teeth whitening, and a coupon for the child for free Toothprints with their exam and cleaning.

“This summer, we look forward to featuring Toothprints at our Woman’s Expo booth. We also promote the product on our patient education monitors in reception rooms and in some of our treatment rooms. In addition, Toothprints brochures and posters can be found throughout our offices.

“Many of our patients haven’t heard of the program before, so our hygienists discuss the program with parents. We are authorized to sell Toothprints kits, so a parent can purchase the product from one of our offices and use it at home — it’s a very simple procedure.”

ABOUT SOUTHWEST DENTAL GROUP. Founded locally in 1973 and owned by Dr. Marc Braslow, Southwest Dental Group is an Arizona company offering six locations with two new offices opening this spring. With over 60 dentists, specialists and hygienists, Southwest Dental Group offers services including general dentistry, periodontics, endodontics, orthodontics, oral surgery, implants, prosthodontics, and assessing TMJ and obstructive sleep apnea disorders (www.swdentalgroup.com).

Toothprints, a product of Kerr Corporation, is available through authorized Kerr distributors. For more information, visit www.kerrdental.com/products/toothprints.

Fees Reminder

Doctors, just a quick reminder that you can access your network fees online at www.ameritasgroup.com, or in New York at www.firstameritasgroup.com, any time of the day or night. If you have any difficulty accessing your fees, please call our Provider Relations Team at 1-800-755-8844. Thank you!

- Click the “Dentist” link.
- Click the “Log-in” link if you already have an account.
- Or, click the “New Users” link if you have not previously set up an account. *Tip: Have a recent Explanation of Payment statement handy.*
- Then click the “Network Fees” tab to view/print fees for your practice location(s).