

Engage your patients in a conversation about instrument sterilization.

Q. I see you have information on Dental Infection Control Awareness Month. What is that?

A. Dental Infection Control Awareness Month is an annual campaign about infection control in the dental office, held in September. It highlights infection control in dentistry. Infection control is one of the things our office is committed to, so we can provide you with safe care. We take it very seriously.

Q. Are you doing anything different with how you clean your dental instruments because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

A. We follow CDC guidelines for instrument reprocessing. In our sterilization procedures, we aim to kill all pathogens or germs, including Sars-CoV-2.

Q. What do you do with the instruments after you've used them on a patient?

A. We follow CDC guidelines on how we treat instruments. We clean and sterilize instruments after use on every patient so that we have sterile instruments when we treat you.

Q. How do you sterilize (treat) the instruments?

A. We clean them first, that's because if there were any debris stuck to the instruments it would not be possible to properly sterilize them. After that, we place them in special closed pouches or wrap them. Then we place these in a sterilizer that kills every germ present on the instruments. The end result is clean and sterile instruments for each of our patients.

**Q. How do you know all of the germs are killed and that the instruments are actually sterile?
How do I know the instruments are clean (sterile)?**

A. We follow the CDC recommendations on using a special test kit containing spores—these are harder than normal bacteria and germs. Using this test, we can check that the sterilizer is doing what it is supposed to do. If the hardy spores in the test kit are killed in the sterilizer then we know it is working to kill all of the germs, including COVID.

Q. What about instruments you can't sterilize? What do you do with those?

A. We use single-use, disposable instruments as much as possible—after we use them on one patient, we throw them away. Liquids that can sterilize instruments are used for the few instruments that are not disposable and cannot stand the high temperatures in the sterilizers.

Q. I'm a little concerned having read some of the news. How do I know the instruments are sterilized?

A. We follow all of the CDC guidelines, and we keep a record—what was sterilized, when, where and how. That's actually a requirement. We can show you our sterilization center if you would like to see it and we'd also be happy to show you the records we keep on our sterilization procedures.

Q. What is OSAP?

A. OSAP stands for the Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention. OSAP is a non-profit organization dedicated to infection control in dentistry that's been around for over 30 years, and provides us with educational materials, updates and training.

This resource was prepared by clinicians for the benefit of the Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention (OSAP), a nonprofit, independent organization providing information and education on infection control and prevention and patient and provider safety to dental care settings worldwide. The information provided is for educational purposes only. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for the users' own exercise of their professional judgment. OSAP, and the clinicians who assisted in preparing this material, expressly disclaims responsibility, and shall have no liability, for any damages, loss, injury, or liability whatsoever suffered as a result of your reliance on the information contained in this resource.