Sterilization Guidelines

Autoclave Maintenance and Cold Sterilization Guidelines

1. Autoclaves will be maintained according to manufacturer’s guidelines. If the manufacturer’s guidelines are not present on site, a qualified technician will service the autoclave annually. A dated sticker on the autoclave or a service receipt is acceptable documentation of appropriate maintenance.

2. Autoclave manufacturer’s directions are strictly followed for instrument pre-cleaning, machine loading, operation safety precautions, minimum time-temperature criteria, and post sterilization processes.

3. Spore testing will be performed monthly. (See Appendix A)

4. Documentation will be maintained on all of the following:
   a. Autoclave maintenance
   b. Sterilization loads; date, time and duration of run cycle, temperature, steam pressure and operator for each run. (See Appendix B)

5. Storage areas for sterilized packages will be clean, dry, and separated from non-sterile items by a functional barrier (e.g., shelf, cabinet door, drawer).

6. Sterilized package labels include date of sterilization, load run identification information, and general contents (e.g. suture set).

7. Maintenance of sterility is event related, not time related. Sterilized items are considered sterile until use, unless an event causes contamination. Sterilized items are not considered sterile if package is opened, wet/moist, discolored or damaged, and should be kept removed from sterile package storage area.

8. For cold/chemical sterilization, the product manufacturer’s directions will be strictly followed for instrument pre-soaking treatment, solution preparation, solution exposure procedures, safety precautions (e.g., room temperature, area ventilation), and post sterilization processes. Sterilization exposure times and solutions expiration date/times must be followed according to product instructions.