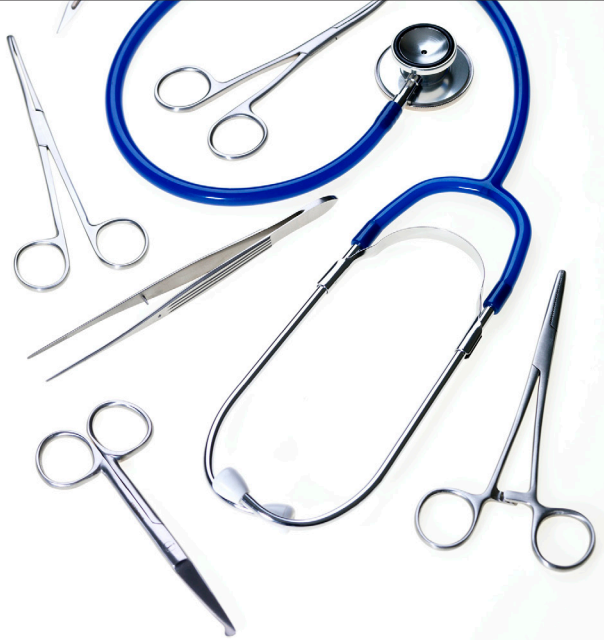
# Reprocessing in **Community Health Care Settings**



*Following best practices for cleaning, disinfection and sterilization of reusable medical items can prevent the transmission of infection to clients/ patients and healthcare providers.*

*The Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC) has produced provincial best practice documents that detail best practice requirements for all Regulated Health Professionals (RHPs). These documents apply to all RHPs. RHPs include, but are not limited to, physicians, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists and chiropractors.*

*Integrating best practice standards into your daily practice will help to protect the health of your clients and staff.*

Reusable medical items must be cleaned and then either disinfected or sterilized after each use unless labeled as a single use item. This is known as reprocessing. Items meant to be reprocessed are classified into three categories: critical, semi-critical, and non-critical. Critical items (items that enter sterile tissue or the vascular system) must be cleaned followed by sterilization after each use (e.g., biopsy forceps, tenaculums, dental hand pieces). Semi-critical items (items that come in contact with non-intact skin or mucous membranes) must be cleaned, followed by a minimum of high level disinfection; however, sterilization is preferred (e.g., metal specula, respiratory therapy equipment). Non-critical items (which contact intact skin only) must be cleaned, followed by a low level disinfectant (e.g., blood pressure cuff, stethoscope).

## Manufacturer Instructions

It is important to always follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintenance and use of medical equipment. Have the manufacturer's instructions on-site and review these instructions for all equipment in your office in order to understand how to reprocess each item.

## The manufacturer's instructions will detail:

- Minimum sterilization time, temperature and pressure requirements.
- Packaging instructions for items to be sterilized.
- Safe operating instructions.
- Maintenance requirements and frequency.

## Tips to Consider When Reprocessing

**Note: this is not an exhaustive list of requirements*

- A designated area must be used to reprocess equipment.
- Cleaning must always take place prior to disinfection or sterilization.
- A separate and dedicated cleaning sink must be used for cleaning items. A hand washing sink must not be used.
- Cleaning brushes must be single use or cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Never reuse or reprocess an item labeled "for single use only" or "disposable".
- Disassemble equipment according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Hinged instruments must be reprocessed in the open and unlocked position.
- Biological indicators (spore tests) must be run every day the sterilizer is used (or every load if using implantable devices).

- Staff must log each sterilization cycle including date, time, temperature, pressure, item(s) sterilized, and staff initials for every load.
- Items run through a sterilizer must be wrapped in approved sterilization package (wrap or pouch).
- Internal chemical indicators must be placed inside every sterilization package as per current PIDAC best practice.
- External chemical indicators must be used with every packaged item to indicate that the item has been sterilized.
- A Bowie-Dick test (air removal test) must be completed on pre-vacuum sterilizers every day the sterilizer is used.

## Biological Indicators (spore testing)

The sterilization process must be monitored to ensure the integrity of the process. Spore test vials or strips must be run in the sterilizer every day it is used (or every load if using implantable devices). Once the spore test is run it must be incubated for a specified period of time before the results can be read.

- Run a control test in addition to the spore test and at the same frequency.
- Additional spore testing may be required (i.e. repairs, relocation of machine). See PIDAC best practice documents for more information.
- It is important that a process be in place in the event of a failed spore test.
- Items in the processed load should not be released until the results of the BI test are available.

## Labeling Sterilization Pouches

Labeling sterilization pouches will help your office track and rotate sterilized items. This is particularly helpful when there is a spore test failure and items must be tracked and held pending further testing. Sterile packaged items must be labeled and include:

- Date reprocessed
- Load/lot number
- Item(s) in the pouch
- Staff member's initials

MOH-0128 17/10

Remember to write on the plastic side of the pouch only and not the paper side as this could allow the ink to penetrate the pouch and render it not sterile.

*Note: Review PIDAC and CSA documents for temperature, humidity and ventilation requirements.*

## Resources

For more information on reprocessing and the minimum standards in Ontario please review the following documents/links:

### Public Health Ontario

http://www.publichealthontario.ca

### Public Health Ontario online modules: Reprocessing in the Community

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/LearningAndDevelopment/OnlineLearning/InfectiousDiseases/Reprocessing/Pages/Course.aspx

### PIDAC Best Practices for Cleaning Disinfection and Sterilization of Medical Equipment/Devices

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PIDAC_Cleaning_Disinfection_and_Sterilization_2013.pdf

### PIDAC Infection Prevention and Control for Clinical Office Practice

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/IPAC_Clinical_Office_Practice_2013.pdf

### PIDAC Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/Best_Practices_Environmental_Cleaning_2012.pdf

### Canadian Standards Association (CSA)

http://www.csagroup.org

### Medical Device Reprocessing Association of Ontario

http://www.mdrao.ca

### Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)

https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01