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:

    a. service the autoclave annually. A dated sticker on the autoclave or a service
    b. 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.

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.**

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.