Subject: Flash Sterilization

Purpose: To sterilize a single instrument or tray of instruments when time does not permit sterilization by the preferred wrapped procedure.

Policy: It is the responsibility of the RN, scrub or instrument tech to insure the proper operation of the sterilizer cycle, handling of the sterilized item(s), and documentation of outcome.

Definition: “Flash” Steam sterilization is defined as sterilization of an unwrapped object at 132 C degrees (270F) at 27 to 28 lbs. of pressure in a gravity displacement autoclave for 3 or 10 minutes depending on the load.

Additional Information:

1. Flash sterilization may be used for the immediate need of an individual item. This would include items that have dropped on the floor and any instance where there is no other sterilization alternative.

2. The efficacy of the sterilization process will be monitored daily with a reliable biological indicator.

3. A chemical indicator will be run in each flash sterilizer with every load.

4. Implants will be flashed only if there is insufficient time to sterilize using the preferred wrapped method. Although it is not recommended, it is the surgeons discretion whether or not to use an implantable that has been flashed.

Equipment List:

Soap and/or blood dissolver, brush prn.
Chemical indicator.

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<th>Procedure Steps</th>
<th>Key Points</th>
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<td>1. Thoroughly wash item/items with soap and/or blood dissolver as needed.</td>
<td>1. To reduce bioburden.</td>
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<td>2. All jointed instruments should be open and/or locked. Instruments designed for disassembly should be disassembled.</td>
<td>2. To insure that all surfaces will be directly exposed to sterilizing agent for the prescribed time and temperature.</td>
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3. Place item/items in gravity only closed pan with chemical indicators and red monitor tabs.

4. Set timer for appropriate amount of time.
   - 5 minute non-cannulated instruments
   - 10 minutes cannulated instruments or heavy load

4. For General Surgery –
   - 5 minutes at 272 degrees for metals, nonporous items, and items without lumens.
   - 10 minutes at 272 degrees for metal instruments combined with porous items, items with lumens, or if foam liners in tray.

5. Check cycle indicator for correct time, temperature and pressure readings. Check sterile indicator for appropriate color change.

5. Chemical indicators and red tabs show that items have been exposed to sterilizing conditions.

6. Remove entire tray from sterilizer using pot holders. Take to room, circulator removed lid, scrub takes tray out of pan.

6. Use aseptic technique.

7. A biological indicator test (bacillus stearothermophilus) should be run daily in the empty flash sterilizer and with any implant.

7. To confirm the effectiveness of a sterilizing process

8. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for incubation procedure.

9. Positive cultures will be reported to the Operating Room Director immediately.

9. Notification to physicians and follow up must be done by the Director.

10. The empty sterilizer must be immediately rechallenged with a biological indicator.

10. To check for correct operation of sterilizer.

11. If a second positive culture occurs, the manufacturer will be notified to service the sterilizer, and the sterilizer will be locked out of service.

12. A chemical indicator will be run with every load.

Reference:

AAMI Standards
2006 AORN Standards, pp. 631-632

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