

Table 3: Steps to Sterilization of Instruments

Adapted from *Infection Prevention and Control Practices for Personal Services: Tattooing, Ear/Body piercing, and Electrolysis*. Health Canada, July 1999.

	Steps	Comments
1.	Clean instruments as per Table 1: Steps to clean instruments.	Instruments that are not clean cannot be sterilized.
2.	Perform hand hygiene and apply gloves.	Hands should be as clean as possible to prevent contamination of clean instruments/equipment.
3.	Clean instruments/equipment must be placed in the appropriate sterilization package and sealed.	Sealed packaged items will maintain sterility after sterilization has been achieved until opened for use. If packaging becomes wet or damaged, sterility cannot be ensured. Instruments in damaged packages must be resterilized or discarded. Ensure packaging is appropriate for type of sterilizer used.
4.	Temperature sensitive chemical indicators must be used with each package.	Temperature sensitive chemical indicators provide an immediate visual check to ensure package has been processed. Note: The colour change demonstrated by a chemical indicator does not ensure that the processed items have been sterilized. Only an appropriate biological indicator can confirm that the sterilization cycle has been successful.
5.	Load the sterilizer evenly and avoid overloading the chamber. Follow manufacturer's directions for loading the chamber.	Overloading the sterilizer will prevent effective sterilization; allow space between the packages.
6.	Start the sterilization process.	Sterilizing time, temperature, pressure and cycles may vary depending on the type of sterilizer used. Follow manufacturer's instructions at all times. With dry heat and autoclave sterilization, time does not start until the appropriate temperature has been reached.
7.	After the sterilization cycle has been completed, remove instruments.	Ensure items are dry before removing from the unit. Sterilized instruments may become contaminated when wet packaging is handled.
8.	Store sterilized items in a clean, dry place that is protected from dust, dirt, and moisture. Sterile items must be stored off the floor.	Handling increases the chances of punctures of sterilized bags. Sterilized items must be stored separately from dirty equipment/instruments.
9.	Record information about each sterilization cycle in the log book.	Monitor each load, recording temperature, pressure, cycle length, etc.

For more information, call

**Brockville 613-345-5685
Smiths Falls 613-283-2740**

**HealthACTION Line
at 1-800-660-5853**

**visit our website at
www.healthunit.org/infectious**