

# Wet packaging after sterilization

## Does this matter?

The objective of packaging materials is to provide a **sterile barrier** and to maintain sterility until the materials are used. If the packaging is damp or even wet following sterilization, it can be assumed that the sterilization has not been successful. Due to its altered structure, wet or damp packaging does not constitute a suitable barrier against microorganisms. Under these conditions microorganisms can multiply, and the sterile goods can as such no longer be stored as sterile goods. The following are often responsible: poor-quality packaging material as well as malfunctions in the sterilizer. Overloading the chamber in the autoclave can also result in damp and wet packaging. Wet and damp packaging can easily be avoided by complying with work procedures for reprocessing and, in particular, sterilization. **Wet packaging can be effectively prevented by using the following measures:**

- › Avoid overloading the autoclave
- › Regular maintenance of the autoclave
- › Adhere to a suitable cooling time
- › Use the suitable **packaging material** indicated for steam sterilization

In addition to the fact that wet packaging is to be regarded as non-sterile and possibly contaminated with bacteria, the need to perform sterilization again also entails increased add-on costs; the time and work required to do so constitutes an extra financial burden for the practice. There are many reasons why damp or wet packaging occurs after steam sterilization (1).

**Important to know:** For type B benchtop steam sterilizer it is unlikely that wet packs appear. These vacuum steam sterilizer type B have a drying step where vacuum plays a major role for the **drying phase**.

#### Bibliography:

- (1) Debabrata Basu, Reason behind wet pack after steamsterilization and its consequences: An overview from Central Sterile Supply Department of a cancer center in eastern India, Journal of Infection and Public Health (2017),10, 235-239.