

Drying – Reason why

At first glance, the importance of drying seems difficult to understand why it is mentioned in the **decontamination** cycle. This stage was initially identified in large sterilization departments as it could lead to wet packs of surgical instrument trays. In today's modern dental surgery it is an important quality control measure as visible droplets of water remaining on/in instruments may lead to wet packs that no longer maintain their sterile barrier function (1). Water drops inside lumens may block penetration of steam if sufficiently large. In addition, soaking wet instruments are more difficult to determine if they are clean. In some areas, if hard water is not rinsed off with purified water and then dried, limescale deposits may also appear. By drying instruments deposits and limescale deposits will be avoided which in addition prolong the life span of the instruments.

Recommendations for correct drying

(please always follow the manufacturer's instructions)

The procedure used for drying should not only be quick and reliable, it should also prevent fresh contamination with chemical, microbial and particulate elements.

Ideally, drying should be performed as part of the **automated cycle** in a **washer disinfectant**. This is usually accomplished at the end of the thermal disinfect stage where the heat from the instruments can be used to 'flash off' any residual water. This is often assisted by a fan in the washer. Failing, then manual drying can be accomplished manually using a clean, lint free (i.e., non shedding) cloth as quickly as possible after washing.

Manual drying

Instruments should be dried by hand with a clean, lint-free cloth. Instrument cavities should be dried by means of compressed air, using the pressure specified by the device manufacturer. To avoid staining, metal instruments should be dried after they have been washed.

Literature:

(1) Debabrata Basu; Journal of Infection and Public Health Volume 10, Issue 2, March–April 2017, Pages 235-239