

Packaging instruments before sterilization

Packaging types and materials

First things first: When packaging products that are to be sterilized, specific requirements apply to the packaging and packaging system used.

A packaging system consists of a **sterile barrier** system and protective packaging. The sterile barrier system consists of a microbial barrier that prevents microbes from entering the packaging and thus causing renewed soiling or contamination. The protective packaging is meant to prevent a possible breach of the sterile barrier, as well as to enable the transportation and storage of the sterile goods.

The type of packaging material used depends on many factors. However, it should be made sure as early as the purchasing stage that the packaging material has been produced in accordance with the current standards. The selection and type of packaging material depends on the type of sterilization procedure, as well as the material to be packed. With regard to steam sterilization, in particular, care must be taken that only packaging materials that have been **validated** for steam sterilization are used, with the associated required property of the **microbial barrier**.

Re-usable receptacles, cartridges and containers that are intended for sterilization are suitable for repeated application and optimized loading.

Other packaging materials that have the required qualities for sterilization are as follows:

- › Paper bags
- › Transparent plastic or paper rolls/pouches/reels
- › Film wrapping material

These packaging materials are only partially sealed sterile barrier systems and must be securely sealed appropriately after filling. This is either performed by using heat-resistant, markable adhesive tape, or by means of **heat sealing** using a sealing or film-sealing device intended for this purpose.

With regard to paper-like packaging materials, either an envelope or a parcel packing procedure should be used.

Instructions for use are available for the materials in question. The materials are checked with regard to the relevant sterilization methods.

The packaging procedure must be documented accordingly for purposes of **traceability**. **This includes:**

- › Product name/contents of packaging (if not visible)
- › Person in charge of the respective reprocessing step
- › Estimated expiry and/or sterilization date
- › Any sequential numbering for identification
(in case an identification is requested)

