

[Home](#) > [Resources](#) > [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) > [Instrument Processing](#) > [Question & Answer](#)

TOP

## **What is the appropriate way to transport contaminated instruments from operatory to sterilization room and visa versa? Thank you!**

The 2003 CDC guidelines for infection control in dentistry states as follows:

*Transporting and Processing Contaminated Critical and Semicritical Patient-Care Items*  
DHCP can be exposed to microorganisms on contaminated instruments and devices through percutaneous injury, contact with nonintact skin on the hands, or contact with mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth. Contaminated instruments should be handled carefully to prevent exposure to sharp instruments that can cause a percutaneous injury. Instruments should be placed in an appropriate container at the point of use to prevent percutaneous injuries during transport to the instrument processing area (13).

*Instrument processing requires multiple steps to achieve sterilization or high-level disinfection. Sterilization is a complex process requiring specialized equipment, adequate space, qualified DHCP who are provided with ongoing training, and regular monitoring for quality assurance (247). Correct cleaning, packaging, sterilizer loading procedures, sterilization methods, or high-level disinfection methods should be followed to ensure that an instrument is adequately processed and safe for reuse on patients.* <sup>1</sup>

Additionally, *Practical Infection Control In Dentistry* states:

*Handling and Transporting Contaminated Patient-Care Items*  
Contaminated instruments should be handled as little as possible and carefully to prevent exposure to sharp instruments that can cause percutaneous injury. Also of concern is exposure to microorganisms on contaminated instruments and devices through contact with nonintact skin on the hands or with mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth. All contaminated

*instruments and devices should be handled carefully by DHCP wearing heavy-duty utility gloves in addition to other appropriate PPE such as protective clothing, protective eyewear, masks, and head and shoe covers. Examination gloves do not provide adequate protection against sharps injuries. Instruments should be placed in an appropriate covered puncture-resistant container in the dental treatment area to limit cross-contamination and prevent percutaneous injuries during transport to the instrument-processing area. These carrying containers should be either red or labeled with the biohazard symbol. <sup>2</sup>*

## Resources

1) Kohn WG, Collins AS, Cleveland JL, Harte JA, Eklund KJ, Malvitz DM, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Guidelines for infection control in dental health-care settings—2003. MMWR Recomm Rep 2003;52(RR-17):1-61. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5217a1.htm>  
Accessed on September 11, 2019.

2) Molinari JA and Harte JA. Practical Infection Control In Dentistry – Third Edition. Wolters Kluwer / Lippincott / Williams & Wilkins. Pages 222-223.

[Back To Top](#)