

## **STERILIZER MONITORING TIPS**

### **The Monitoring Process**

It is vital to the safety of your employees and patients that you properly monitor the sterilization process in your practice. It is important to mechanically monitor your sterilizer during every cycle, paying close attention to all gauges and printouts and following the manufacturer's recommendations. At least once daily (preferably with every sterilizer cycle), it is recommended that chemical indicators/integrators are used to monitor the main parameters of the sterilization cycle including time, steam, and temperature. Biological monitoring should also be performed to determine sterilization. Biological indicators are the only method of demonstrating sterilization, as the results show if actual microbial life has been destroyed. Biological monitoring is recommended on a weekly basis by the CDC, ADA, OSAP, and AAMI.

### **Record Keeping**

Another necessary step to reduce your exposure to liability is accurate record keeping. It is important to keep accurate records regarding the phases of sterilizer monitoring. Inspectors may request to see your records to see that mechanical, chemical and biological monitoring is being properly performed and recorded. Should a situation arise and litigation become necessary, accurate records will protect you and your practice.

### **Employee Performance**

The most frequent reason for sterilization failure is operator error. It is critical that specific procedures and techniques be clearly defined and followed to aid the overall quality assurance program. The proper training of employees in sterilizer operation and sterilization procedures can result in more effective sterilization.

### **Package Identification**

Every item that is processed should be labeled with the date of sterilization, cycle number, contents, and expiration date. When storing and using sterile packages, remember that sterility is event related more than time related.

Sterilizer Maintenance

### **Maintenance recording should include:**

- Date of service
- Reason for maintenance
- Model and serial number of sterilizer
- Location
- Name of person requesting service
- Description of service
- Types and parts replaced
- Signature of service technician
- Date for retesting
- Retesting results