

Proper Endoscope Handling & Storage:

Reducing the Risk of Infection

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Background

Due to the recent change of standards and guidelines pertaining to infection prevention and endoscope handling/storage, it has been identified through the use of a survey, that staff members had a universal sense of confusion regarding the proper steps. After these findings were brought to light it was evident that further education and training were necessary for our staff and it is likely other labs share the same confusion.

Scope Handling

Drying of endoscopes is a crucial step in ensuring the prevention of bacterial transmission and nosocomial infection

- To help ensure that no moisture is left in any part of the endoscope, all channels should be flushed with 70% alcohol to facilitate drying
- All channels should be purged with filtered medical grade air at the correct psi per scope manufacturer recommendations.
- The exterior of the scope should be dried with a soft, lint free cloth.



Scope Hang Time

According to the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (ANS/AAMI) ST91:2015- The accepted time interval for storage of processed endoscopes before they can no longer be safe for patient use is not well defined. Several guidelines and recommended practices provide recommendations as to the maximum duration of storage time before the endoscope is processed for the next use.

- SGNA supports a 7 day storage for reprocessed endoscopes if they were reprocessed and stored according to professional guidelines.
- Gastroenterology Association of Australia: Gastrosopes, colonoscopes, Radial EUS endoscopes need to be disinfected prior to use when the storage time of 72 hours is elapsed. Duodenoscopes, Bronchoscopes, Bronchoscopes and Linear EUS endoscopes need to be disinfected prior to use when storage time of 12 hours is elapsed.

Tracking & Labeling System

The CDC suggests that a process be implemented that allows staff to know when a specific scope has been reprocessed or sterilized.

Tags and labels should include the following information

- Date of processing
- Name of person who preformed the reprocessing
- Date high level disinfection was completed

Scope Storage

- Endoscopes must be stored hanging vertically with distal tip hanging freely in a clean, well ventilated and dust free in order to keep the endoscopes dry and free of micro contamination
- Storage must be in accordance with endoscope and storage cabinet manufacture's IFUs.
- There should be sufficient space between and scopes to prevent them hitting into one another, which can cause damage to the scopes.
- Caps, valves and other detachable components should be removed to prevent moisture accumulation and subsequent microbial growth.
- When using reusable valves and buttons, literature suggests they should be reprocessed and stored together with the endoscopes as a unique set for tracking purposes.



Removing Scopes From Storage

- Endoscopes must always be handled once hands are clean and gloves must be worn.
- Scopes that become contaminated due to improper handling must be reprocessed before use.



References:

- SGNA Practice Committee 2015-16. (2015). Endoscope reprocessing protocol. *Standards of Infection Prevention in Reprocessing Flexible Gastrointestinal Endoscopes*.
- Storage of Reprocessed Endoscopes. (2015).AAMI ST:91:2015. From the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation
- Wicklin, S., Conner, R. and Spry C. (2016). Guideline for processing flexible endoscopes. *Association of Operating Room Nurses*.