

General duties for the dental assistant.



In some large clinics the used instruments are taken to a central area for decontamination. These instruments could cause serious injuries because many are sharp and will have blood and saliva on them which may be infected.

Inside the box is a metal tray for lifting out the instruments directly into an ultrasonic bath or washer/disinfector.

The lid is lockable so no accidents can happen when moving the box.

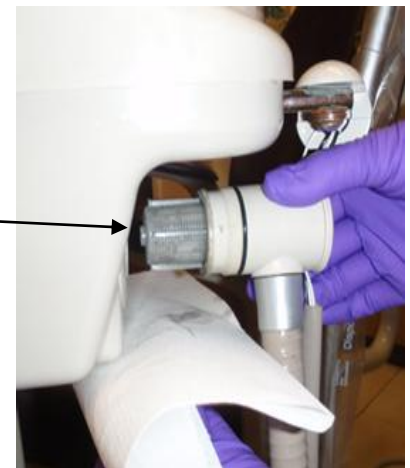


Once instruments have been sterilised they are placed in pouches and stored until required, but must be re-sterilised if not used within 3 months.



Each day the suction unit must be cleaned. After each patient clean water must be run through the system to stop blood and saliva going hard within the tubes. A cleaning agent designed for the unit (not one that forms foam or bubbles) is run through the tubes for 10 minutes. There is usually a filter or trap to collect amalgam, filling impression material and this must be taken out and cleaned each day.

Do not wash the contents down the sink or the sink will quickly block.



There will often be a trap or filter in the floor box which should be checked and cleaned each week.

At the bottom of some aspirator motors there is a bowl to collect amalgam that has been cut into very fine pieces by the high speed drill and this stops it damaging the atmosphere by going into the public waste.



Remember to check the sharps containers and the special waste containers to ensure they are not more than three quarters full – if so the lid should be sealed and they must be stored safely until a contractor can take them away for safe disposal. You may be required to record when you give sharps containers or clinical waste to a contractor.



Stores –which includes all materials and spare parts or equipment must be well organised to ensure the clinic keeps working well.

If you have too many stores it costs a lot of money, you need a lot of space to keep the stores and some items may be out of date before they are used, or newer types of materials become available and the old ones are no longer used.

A good system will have a list of all the materials regularly used and depending on how quickly an order will take to be delivered there will be a supply for twice that period. The list of materials should have the minimum number of any item that is required to be stored so that it is obvious when more has to be ordered.

A good dental assistant will check at the start of each day that there are sufficient materials in the surgery to last the day and not have to make constant trips to the stores area when the dentist needs a material.

If the materials and equipment are stored in a well organised way with similar materials, burs, and disposable items being clearly labelled then it is easy for the assistant to find the items needed and easy for someone to check the number of items and when an order needs to be placed.

When new stores arrive at the clinic the new materials need to be put at the back of the shelf so they are not used first.

Some items need to be stored in a cool area and out of sunlight –always read the instructions.

The more vital a piece of equipment is the more important it is to have any spare part it may require. The dental supply company will tell you which parts may break down and how often they need to supply that part.

It is useful to have a checklist for very occasional items such as oil for compressor, spare light for unit, spare fuses.

It is important to have compressors and autoclaves checked by an engineer each year as they work at very high pressure and if a fault develops they can explode. Any item with a plug should be checked each year to ensure it is still safe.

Many moving items such as the chair, light and x-ray unit need some oil or grease to keep them moving easily.