



Single-Use Items or Disposable items

This practice advisory aims to emphasize the importance of understanding the proper usage of single-use items in dental practices and the risks associated with reusing them.

Single-use items

Also known as disposable items, are designed for use on one patient during a procedure and then discarded. These items are not intended to be cleaned, disinfected, or sterilized for reuse. Using single-use items helps prevent cross-contamination and infection, ensuring patient safety and maintaining high standards of hygiene. The expiry date on these items must be respected.

Common single-use items in dental practices include:

- Prophylaxis angles
- High-volume evacuator tips
- Impression trays
- Dental burs
- Certain air and water syringe tips

Risks of Reusing Single-Use Items

- **Infection Risk:** Reusing single-use items can lead to cross-contamination between patients, increasing the risk of infections.
- **Ineffective Sterilization:** Many single-use items are not heat-tolerant and cannot be reliably cleaned or sterilized.
- **Structural Integrity:** Reprocessing can deteriorate the structural integrity of items like burs and endodontic files, making them prone to breakage during use.

Disposal Guidelines

- **Proper Disposal:** Single-use items must be disposed of immediately after use. Most can be discarded with regular trash, but some may require special handling if they meet the definition of regulated medical waste (e.g., items soaked with blood or saliva, contaminated sharps).

- **Environmental Considerations:** While single-use items contribute to waste, some manufacturers are developing biodegradable alternatives to address environmental concerns.

Recommendations

- **Strict Adherence:** Dental health care personnel must strictly adhere to guidelines for single-use items, using them for one patient only and disposing of them appropriately.
- **Training and Awareness:** Regular training and awareness programs must be conducted to ensure all staff members understand the importance of using single-use items and the risks associated with reusing them.

By following this practice advisory, dental/hygiene practices can enhance infection control, ensure patient safety, and maintain high standards of care.



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