



STERISHEET™
by STERIMED

ADDRESSING WET PACK ISSUES



> DEFINITION

One of the frequently reported issues in sterilization departments are wet packs.

What can actually be considered as a wet pack?

A wet pack can be defined as a package with residual water in or outside the packaging. This residual water can be a vehicle to microorganisms, which can then contaminate the medical devices inside the pack.

Occurrence of wet pack requires reprocessing of instruments, which means:

- Increased work load
- Increased costs
- Risk of instrument contamination
- Delays in delivering instruments to OR

> PROBLEM SOLVING

Wet pack occurrence is usually related to sterilization process and does not relate to sterilization wrap materials.

Nevertheless, careful selection of sterilization wrap material, together with complementary use of tray liners, can help reduce the risk of wet pack occurrence in your sterilization processes.

Before you decide to change sterilization packaging think about the issue more deeply. What is actually causing the problem?

Go to the roots. Search for the cause. Investigate the process itself.

Sterilization wraps do not create wet pack conditions, but not optimized process do!

A) MAIN IDENTIFIED SOURCES OF WET PACK ISSUES

- Steam supply
- Improperly maintained condensation return system
- Low vacuum performance
- Seasonal changes in heating and cooling conditions

Appropriate actions include:

- Check that the sterilizer has good steam quality, which can be improved by the use of filters and separators. Long steam runs, end-of-line connections, boiler maintenance, and chemical treatments can contribute to poor steam quality.
- Verify that the dynamic steam pressure is within the specified range and is properly trapped.

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B) IF THE STEAM SUPPLY IS RULED OUT, THE PROBLEM COULD BE RELATED TO PREPARATION AND LOADING TECHNIQUES.

- Trays should be adequately sized to distribute mass. Overloaded trays cause slower heat transfer and inefficient drying.
- Disassemble complex instruments to avoid trapping steam.
- During the sterilization process, condensation is created. Drainage, or the ability to drain condensation, is crucial.
- Follow the ANSI/AAMI ST79: Comprehensive Guide to Steam Sterilization and Sterility Assurance in Health Care Facilities and the sterilizer manufacturer's recommendations for load configurations.
- Containers and heavy sets should be loaded on the bottom shelf with wrapped instruments on the upper level.
- Steam must have the ability to make contact with the load. Overloading the chamber inhibits steam contact.
- Loads must not touch the chamber walls, ceiling or baffles.
- Plastic containers are difficult to dry, especially large orthopedic containers with multiple layers.
- It is good practice to let the load sit on the load cart outside of the chamber for 30 to 60 minutes (or up to 2 hours as needed) to allow the load to cool and the heated steam vapor to dissipate. Opening an instrument tray or basin set immediately after the cycle may create condensation which would have normally dissipated during cooling time.
 - Keep the load away from air conditioning vents during the cooling process.
 - If utilizing transport trays, the cooling time needs to be increased to 60 minutes.
- Adding time in the sterilizer with the door open after the cycle is complete, may be more effective than adding more dry time.

C) IN RARE CASES, MECHANICAL OR DESIGN ISSUES MAY BE CONTRIBUTING TO WET PACK.

- If the solutions outlined above do not solve the wet-pack issues, the sterilizer manufacturer should be contacted for further guidance.

> CONCLUSION

Wet pack issues shall be assessed through review of process, load, equipment, steam supply.

Cellulose-based sterilization wrap materials are known to be less prone to wet pack issues than SMS. In case of doubt, or in order to optimize safety in sterilization processes at the same time as the physical protection of sterilized instruments, tray liners can also be used.

The STERIMED team is ready to answer any questions related to this topic.
 Contact us directly: sterisheet@sterimed.fr or through your local distributor.

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