

# Ten good-practice points for using benchtop steam sterilizers

- Where possible, use a sterile service facility rather than processing locally.
- Do not process wrapped, tubular or textile products in a conventional benchtop steam sterilizer – process them only in a suitable vacuum benchtop steam sterilizer.
- All items must be clean and dry before loading into the sterilizer.  
Do not overload the sterilizer – the load items might not be sterilized.
- Sterilization performance must be checked frequently (daily – this includes the steam penetration test on vacuum benchtop sterilizers – and weekly by the user; quarterly and annually by a competent test person). This is in addition to routine maintenance and cleaning.
- Drain and clean chamber and reservoir at the end of each day and leave dry.  
Replenish with sterile water for irrigation from an unopened container.
- Have the sterilizer's pressure system checked for safety. Keep records of all checks and repairs to the pressure system. This is a legal requirement.  
Do not circumvent safety features.
- Keep permanent records of every sterilization cycle.
- Keep written records of all testing and maintenance carried out on every sterilizer.  
The records should be kept in a logbook.
- Technical advice is available from Registered Authorised Persons (sterilizers), AP(s). Infection Control Nurses can advise on prevention of cross infection.  
Consult them if you are not sure how to sterilize a piece of equipment.
- Never re-process single-use devices.