Handling Soiled & Expired Supplies

Purpose:

To ensure that the management of soiled or expired supplies from patient care areas is consistent with infection control practices that reduce the risk of cross contamination.

Definition:

1. Soiled supplies includes equipment or instruments that are contaminated with visible blood, body fluids, or other potentially infectious materials.
2. Expired items are those in which the expiration date has been exceeded or the integrity of the package has been compromised.
3. This guideline does not apply to furnishings, such as wheelchairs and stretchers.

Policy:

1. HANDLING SOILED SUPPLIES

   A. Gloves must be worn when touching items that are visibly soiled with blood or body fluids.

   B. Employees are not to rinse soiled items before returning them to CMS. since this increases the risk of environmental contamination.

   C. Disposable sharps, such as needles and scalpel blades, are removed and discarded in the sharps container before sending soiled instrument trays or supplies to CMS. (Failure to remove sharps is a serious threat to healthcare workers and will result in a variance report.)

   G. Instruments that are contaminated with blood or body fluids (excluding moisture sensitive items i.e. electronics) must be placed in a plastic bag with a moist gauze or paper towel, sealed closed, and returned to the CMS decontamination room by unit personnel.
2. CMS PICK-UP ROUNDS

A. Each department works with CMS supervisors and staff to ensure appropriate time for sending and for picking up soiled items.

B. Soiled supplies are returned to the decontamination area in CMS. These items must be checked in by a CMS staff member and the transaction slip initialed. A copy of the transaction will be given to the unit for later retrieval of the item. Unused supplies returned for patient credit are cleared with the shift supervisor before they are returned. Instructions for handling are given at that time.

3. EQUIPMENT RETURN

A. Discontinued use of Equipment – Health care workers must return items no longer needed for patient care to CMS as quickly as possible.

B. Large used items that are visibly soiled are covered with plastic bags and returned to the CMS equipment room. The equipment tag remains attached to the item in order for CMS to discontinue the patient charge associated with its use.

C. Disposable pieces or pads are discarded before returning equipment to CMS.

D. In-use equipment that malfunctions or breaks is returned to CMS with a note attached stating the problem encountered. A replacement is issued, and the equipment tag is stamped with the same patient name.

4. LINEN

Linen from CMS trays, sets, and single items is placed in the unit soiled laundry hamper.

5. EXPIRED STERILE SUPPLIES

A. A sterile packaged item is considered expired and non sterile when:
   1. The package has been opened or broken.
   2. The sterile indicator tape has not changed appropriately.
   3. The internal indicator has not changed appropriately.
   4. The integrity of plastic, paper or cloth wrappers is damaged, soiled or watermarked.
   5. The expiration date on the package has been exceeded.
B. Healthcare workers are responsible to check for package integrity and expiration prior to use. A variance report should be generated when breaks in package integrity are discovered on patient care units.

6. DECONTAMINATION, DISINFECTION AND STERILIZATION

Decontamination, disinfection and sterilization of instruments and patient care equipment is performed by CMS. Decontamination, disinfection and sterilization of instruments and equipment outside of CMS must be approved by the Infection Control Committee.

7. PROCESSING LISTS

CMS and the Infection Control Department should be contacted prior to the use or purchase of new instruments and equipment so that manufacturer recommendations for decontamination, disinfection and sterilization can be reviewed for appropriateness, effectiveness, and availability of needed technology. Processing is not done without contacting the manufacturer when an item is presented to CMS without prior opportunity to review relevant literature.

A. Information on new items is submitted to CMS to determine manufacturer recommendations for cleaning and disinfection or sterilization. If no information is available, the manufacturer is notified before any item is processed.

B. The requested sterilization system is entered on the sterilization requisition when unit-owned items are submitted for sterilization. The unit documents the manufacturer’s recommendations for steam, ethylene oxide, or hydrogen peroxide sterilization any special packaging instructions.


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