Aseptic Technique

Aseptic technique is used when there is a need to have added precautions that prevent contamination of a patient or sterile area. This is different from medical asepsis (clean technique) where hand hygiene and barrier techniques are used to prevent the transfer of organisms. Aseptic technique is essential when assisting in a sterile procedure to prevent the contamination of an open wound.



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Invasive Procedures
Invasive Procedure
Sterility is vital during an invasive procedure, such as procedures that require the intentional perforation of the patient's skin (e.g., the insertion of intravenous catheters or administration of injections). Surgical asepsis aims to eliminate all microorganisms, including pathogens and spores from the object. If contamination occurs, sepsis can result.

Skin Integrity Broken
Skin Broken
Surgical aseptic technique is also used outside of the operating room, such as when the skin's integrity is broken as a result of trauma, surgical incision, or burns. In addition, procedures such as inserting a urinary catheter, reapplying a sterile dressing, and tracheobronchial airway suctioning, all require a surgical aseptic technique.

Sterility

Hands Up for Scrubbing
Hands Up while Scrubbing
When washing your hands, never have the water running down your arm and hands. This can lead to dirty water drops from higher up on your arm dripping down and contaminating your hands. Always wash with your hands higher than your elbows. Your hands/sterile gloves should never drop below your waist.

Keep Objects in View
Objects in View
Always keep your eyes on the sterile field. This way, if there is a question about sterility you can confirm what happened. This is also why everything sterile needs to stay above the waist.

Only Sterile Objects in Field
Only Sterile-sterling Objects allowed in Field
Non-sterile objects cannot enter the sterile field. This would contaminate the field. Even brushing up against the sterile drape will contaminate the field.

Only Sterile Touches Sterile
Sterile-sterling touching Sterile-sterling
If a package is labeled sterile, this means that the objects in the package are sterile and not the package itself. You can open a package and without touching the content of the package, drop the content onto the sterile field.

Contamination

Edges of Sterile Field
Contaminated Edges of the Sterile-sterling Field
Pay close attention to the edges of a sterile field, because they represent the border beyond which the field is considered contaminated. If a sterile drape is completely covering a table, anything beyond the edge of the table or hanging off it is considered contaminated. If the sterile field doesn't extend to the end

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of a table, then a 1-inch border around the drape is considered contaminated. Never place anything sterile within the 1-inch border.

If Sterility Questioned

Sterile-sterling with a Question-mark is discarded

If the sterile field is ever questioned, then the field needs to be tossed and set back up using aseptic technique. Always err on the side of caution.

If Wet or Prolonged Exposure to Air

Wet and Exposed to Long Air

Moisture is a mode of transfer for microorganisms. Many sterile fields will get bodily fluids on them such as blood, which doesn't necessarily compromise the field. However, if a sterile field becomes wet with a contaminated liquid or has had prolonged exposure to air, it should be discarded. When adding a solution into the sterile field have the lip of the bottle 1 to 2 inches above the receiving container and slowly pour to prevent splashing.

Considerations

Never Leave Sterile Area

Cannot Leave the Area

Once your eyes leave the sterile field and the field comes into question, everything needs to be discarded. To prevent any issues, never leave the sterile area.

PPE Order

PPE in Order

To maintain aseptic technique, there is an order to donning personal protective equipment (PPE). The proper order of PPE according to the CDC and tested on the NCLEX® is as follows: gown, mask or respirator, goggles or face shield then finally gloves.

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