

# GUIDELINE FOR CLEANING AND PROCESSING FLEXIBLE ENDOSCOPES AND ENDOSCOPE ACCESSORIES

**T**he Guideline for Cleaning and Processing Flexible Endoscopes and Endoscope Accessories was developed by the AORN Recommended Practices Committee and was approved by the AORN Board of Directors. It was presented as proposed recommendations for comments by members and others. The guideline is effective January 1, 2009. The recommendations in the guideline are intended to be achievable and represent what is believed to be an optimal level of practice. Policies and procedures will reflect variations in practice settings and/or clinical situations that determine the degree to which the guideline can be implemented. AORN recognizes the various settings in which perioperative nurses practice; therefore, this guideline is adaptable to various practice settings. These practice settings include traditional operating rooms, ambulatory surgery centers, physician's offices, cardiac catheterization laboratories, endoscopy suites, radiology departments, and all other areas where operative and other invasive procedures may be performed.

## Purpose

This document provides guidance to assist personnel in the care, cleaning, decontamination, maintenance, handling, storage, sterilization, and/or disinfection of flexible endoscopes and related accessories. Use of this guideline will assist personnel in providing a safe environment for patients and health care workers.

The guideline is based on the most current evidence available at the time of development. It should be used to develop policies and procedures for the care of flexible endoscopes and accessories in the practice setting. As new information becomes available, perioperative nurses should consult with infection preventionists and epidemiologists to review and revise procedures as appropriate. This guideline pertains only to flexible endoscopes and is divided into the following sections:

- following manufacturer's instructions,
- precleaning,
- transport to decontamination,
- leak testing,
- cleaning,
- high-level disinfection
- alcohol treatment,
- drying,
- inspection,
- storage,
- handling damaged flexible endoscopes,

- care of accessories, and
- personal protective equipment (PPE).

Competencies, documentation, policies and procedures, and quality management suggestions also are discussed. For more information on the care and cleaning of rigid endoscopes and related equipment, refer to the AORN "Recommended practices for cleaning and care of surgical instruments and powered equipment."<sup>1</sup>

## Recommendation I

**Flexible endoscopes should be cleaned and stored in accordance with the manufacturer's written instructions.**

Failure to follow the manufacturer's written instructions could result in ineffective cleaning that interferes with high-level disinfection or sterilization, creating a risk of infection for the patient. The manufacturer's warranty may be void if the written instructions for care and use of the device are not followed.

- I.a. The manufacturer's written instructions for flexible endoscopes and all accessories should be followed regarding
- cleaning processes,
  - selection of cleaning product,
  - selection of disinfectant/sterilization products,
  - use of alcohol, and
  - compatibility with automatic endoscope reprocessors.

Flexible endoscopes manufactured by different companies require different cleaning processes as described in the manufacturer's written instructions. The flexible endoscope manufacturer is required to demonstrate to the US Food and Drug Administration in the pre-market clearance application that the cleaning /disinfecting instructions are adequate and that the results are reproducible.<sup>2</sup> All flexible endoscopes and accessories cannot be processed successfully in all automatic endoscopic reprocessors.<sup>3</sup>

- I.b. High-level disinfectant and chemical cleaner manufacturers' written instructions should be followed regarding
- compatibility with the flexible endoscope and accessories,
  - water quality,
  - dilution,

