

Care and Handling of Instruments

Concerning your question on why staining, pitting or rusting can develop in stainless steel Instruments; there are some basic points for the care and handling of surgical instruments which will extend the life of the instrument, eliminate staining or corrosion and lower the cost in use. These are as follows: -

1. Instruments should be rinsed as soon as possible after use to remove blood, serum and saline. Do not use a sponge basin as any residue from normal saline solution can cause corrosion to develop over a period of time.
2. Instruments should be thoroughly dried after cleaning and before wrapping or storing, as moisture left in the box lock or serrations can cause rust or corrosion to develop.
3. Do not leave instruments in a cold sterilization soak solution for extended periods as these solutions tend to be corrosive, after cold sterilization, rinse the instruments in distilled or demineralized water and dry thoroughly).
4. If using cold sterilization technique, change the solution according to directions as prolonged use will cause the solution to become corrosive.
5. Do not use caustic cleaners or any other cleaner except those specified for cleaning surgical instruments.
6. Do not clean instruments with steel wool or scouring powder, or use PH detergents. If cleaning by hand, use a specific instrument cleaner or a natural detergent soap and a soft brush (rinse with demineralized or distilled water).
7. Check your autoclave. Iron, sodium, calcium, magnesium or copper in your water can cause spotting, staining or corrosion to occur. In hard water areas, clean the line deposits from your autoclave, install a steam filter if possible. It will remove most of dirt, rust and pipe scale.
8. Make sure your wraps are rinsed sufficiently (6 to 8 times) by the laundry to remove all chlorine bleach as any residue can cause staining or corrosion during autoclaving.