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Infection control

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HTM 01-05: Advice updates

Applies to: All **Last reviewed:** 19/01/2011 **Last updated:** 27/07/2010

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Deadlines for essential quality requirements confirmed

The Chief Dental Officer confirms that practices in England should achieve essential requirements by December 2010, which includes a plan of how they will work towards achieving 'best practice'. Although practices and PCTs can agree a timescale for achieving best practice, PCTs should not impose best practice requirements unilaterally. The CDO letter, dated 30 June, can be downloaded [below](#).

Re-use of re-usable endodontic files and reamers

In the March CDO Update the Department of Health in England state that re-usable endodontic files and reamers (as marketed by the manufacturer) can now be re-used on the same patient. This represents a relaxation of the guidance provided in [HTM 01-05](#), and the earlier CDO letter of December 2007.

Following the completion of the tissue prion infectivity studies from the Health Protection Agency and the discussion of their findings at the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), the Department has considered policy revisions in respect of dental instruments (the use of patient identified instruments that are difficult to clean and sterilize effectively already occurs in medical practice, an example being the advice from the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens, Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Group on the use and reprocessing of endoscopes).

This relaxation is conditional upon the instruments being marketed as re-usable and the practice being satisfied that the tracing and audit procedures used are such as to exclude error in identifying the instrument(s) and associating them with the correct patient.

The practice must be satisfied that the instrument tracing and audit procedures used are robust and will exclude error in identifying the instrument(s) and associating them with the correct patient. Therefore:

- When manual washing or ultrasonic cleaning is used the files / reamers should be washed separately from other instruments
- Where automated washer–disinfectors are used, the risk of cross-contamination to other instruments would be very low, in view of the dilution factors. Therefore, these instruments do not need to be dealt with on a separate run. However only endodontic files and reamers from a single patient can be washed in any one cycle of a washer-disinfector.
- Only endodontic files and reamers from a single patient can be sterilized in any one cycle of an autoclave
- As a key part of this assurance, particular care will also be needed in terms of storage.

Update on rinse water quality

The updated HTM 01-05 guidance, recently distributed to all NHS dental practices, contains new recommendations regarding the quality requirements for final rinsing water. Potable tap water is considered satisfactory for final rinsing of dental instruments, provided it meets the necessary quality requirements. This has raised the issue of whether dental practices have access to the information they need in order to assess whether the local water supply meets the quality requirements described in the HTM.

The Department will be approaching the Health Protection Agency for advice on the measurement of, and availability of information on, endotoxin levels in water supplies. This advice will inform an implementation programme over the next 12 months, and further information will be made available as this work progresses.

In the meantime, the quality of final rinse water will not be assessed as part of compliance with essential quality requirements until the information regarding the appropriateness of the local water supply is readily available to dental practices.

The CDO Update can be downloaded in full below.

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 CDO letter Essential quality requirements June 2010 (56.34 KB)	 CDO Update March 2010 (192.81 KB)
	 HTM 01-05 Audit Tool (1.71 MB)
 HTM 01-05 DH Evidence Base - Graded (92.21 KB)	 A12 Infection control in dentistry - Dec 2009 - revised (1 MB)
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