

Example of the Humipak™ to Keep Items Moist

NOTE: This document is an example of a policy that may be instituted in a health-care facility for the use of the Humipak™ to keep instruments/medical devices moist after they have been used.

SUBJECT: Using the Humipak™ to keep instruments/medical devices moist after they have been used

DEPARTMENT: Sterile Processing/Medical Device Reprocessing/Central Processing

APPROVED BY:

EFFECTIVE: Sept. 2017

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PURPOSE: To provide guidance in using the Humipak™ product in keeping items in a moist environment after use until the cleaning process can begin.

POLICY: To keep items moist until they are cleaning procedures commence.

RATIONALE: Dried blood is a significant challenge to the cleaning of patient-used items. Thus, it is recommended that patient-used items be cleaned immediately following the procedure. However, this is not always possible. In these cases, the standards recommend they be kept moist until the cleaning process can begin.

Although it is best practice for items to be processed immediately after use to prevent the drying of contaminants, at times, this is not practical due a high volume of procedures, transportation time to the processing area and other factors.. Studies have that keeping items in a moist environment, after use greatly reduces protein/amyloid attachment and improves cleaning efficacy. ¹

Any department that reprocesses healthcare products needs to reduce the Decontamination Holding Time (DHT). This (DHT) is the time from when

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the item is last used to when it is the cleaning process begins. This can vary in length of time from just a few minutes to hours or even days.

NOTE: It is important to follow the IFU for precleaning and other instructions concerning preparation for transportation to its next stage of reprocessing (e.g., instruments in the open position) for the item to be contained in the Humipak.

STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY RECOMMENDATIONS:

AORN: "...Prior to transport, instruments should be prepared in such a way as to prevent organic soils from drying placing a towel moistened with water (not saline) over the instrument, placing items inside a package designed to maintain humid conditions, or applying a product designed for pre-treatment. Long delays in processing can result in the formation of tenacious and difficult-to-remove biofilm that will shield microorganisms from routine cleaning procedures and possibly interfere with disinfection or sterilization. ..."²

The AORN also states the following regarding endoscope transportation for reprocessing:

"IV.b. Endoscopes and accessories should be kept wet or damp but not submerged in liquid during transport: High Evidence] Keeping the endoscope and accessories wet helps dilute, soften, and ease removal of organic soils. Allowing organic material to dry on the surface and in the channels of the endoscope makes the cleaning process difficult.

Submerging the endoscope in liquid during transport may increase the risk of spillage and could lead to fluid invasion if the endoscope has an unknown leak."³

Thus, instrument manufacturers, AAMI, AORN and others generally recommend that cleaning of instruments begin as soon as possible so that organic soils, particularly blood, do not dry. But at times, this is not practical. One solution is to extend the DHT of soiled items is to place the instruments/medical devices into a Humipak™.

The Humipak™ is designed to keep items moist. The Humipak™ consists of a layer of highly absorbent material sandwiched between two layers of

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water-proof film. To use, place individual items, or an entire tray inside the Humipak™, add the specified amount of water to the absorbent layer, and seal with the peel away adhesive strip. This creates a water-tight, moist atmosphere that helps prevent organics from drying for an extended period of time. Further, the transparent film allows observation of the contents and a list of contents and/instructions can be written directly onto the film.

Testing has demonstrated that items will remain moist for up to 5 days, depending upon the nature of the item, and the composition of the residue.^{4,3} This testing was done to demonstrate the ability of the Humipak to maintain an environment that prevents organics from drying and should not be interpreted as a recommendation for the length of time to keep items in the Humipak. It is recommended to begin the cleaning process as soon as possible.

The Humipak™ is a useful product and has been shown to work in situations where cleaning procedures are significantly by keeping items moist until processing can occur.⁴

Thus, placing items into the Humipak™ after use will keep items moist longer delaying the drying of contaminants before the cleaning process commences.⁵

PROCEDURE:

Items placed in the Humipak™ should be cleaned as soon as possible. When opening the Humipak™ use the correct PPE. To transport items placed in the Humipak™ they must be contained in a hospital approved container like the Healthmark SST™.

1. Pick the correct size (see IFU for the various sizes) of Humipak™ pouch for the items that are to be kept moist until reprocessing.
2. Add the specified amount of water per the directions found on the Humipak™ pouch.
3. Water will wick into and be absorbed throughout the Humipak™ pouch because of the special absorbent layer between the transparent films.
4. Place items in the pouch.
5. Peel off protective strip from adhesive band.

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6. Fold over the adhesive strip and press down firmly from the center outwards to insure a watertight seal.
7. Place Humipak™ in a hospital approved container for transportation.
8. Send to the appropriate area for reprocessing as soon as possible.
9. The Humipak is NOT a sharps container and is NOT puncture proof. Be sure to follow your facility's policy for handling contaminated reusable sharps in compliance with OSHA Guidelines for transporting.
10. Follow all manufacturers' IFU on precleaning before placing any instrument in the Humipak™

RESPONSIBILITY: The Processing Area Manager (or their designee) is responsible for assuring training of staff, initiation, completion, documentation and analysis of the Humipak™ policy.

¹“Efficacy of humidity retention bags for the reduced adsorption and improved cleaning of tissue proteins including prion-associated amyloid to surgical stainless steel surfaces”; Biofouling, 2015; Vol. 36, No. 6, 535–541, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08927014.2015.1067686> . T.J. Secker*, H.E. Pinchin, R.C. Hervé and C.W. Keevil

² © 2017 Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation ■ ANSI/AAMI ST79:2017. Section 6.3.5, page 35.

³ AORN GUIDELINE FOR PROCESSING FLEXIBLE ENDOSCOPES, Revised February 2019 for publication in Guidelines for Perioperative Practice, 2016 edition.

³ ⁵http://www.healthmark.info/InstrumentRetrieval/HumiPak/Humipak_Verification_Tests.pdf

⁶ http://www.healthmark.info/InstrumentRetrieval/HumiPak/Humipak_IFU_2017-07-19.pdf