



Sterile Processing CRCST

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Practice Questions

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1. In a sterile processing department, how should airflow and traffic generally move between the decontamination and clean areas?

- A. From clean to dirty
- B. Air should be fully recirculated between both
- C. From dirty (decontamination) to clean
- D. Direction does not matter if doors stay closed

2. According to the Spaulding classification, an item that contacts intact skin only (for example a blood pressure cuff) is classified as:

- A. Critical
- B. Semi-critical
- C. Noncritical
- D. Sterile

3. What is the active sterilizing agent in a steam (autoclave) sterilizer?

- A. Dry heat alone
- B. Ultraviolet radiation
- C. Ethylene oxide gas
- D. Moist heat in the form of saturated steam under pressure

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4. A hemostat (hemostatic forceps) is primarily used to:

- A. Cut tissue
- B. Retract a wound edge
- C. Suction fluid
- D. Clamp blood vessels to control bleeding



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5. The primary purpose of a sterilization packaging system is to:

- A. Make sets look uniform
- B. Allow sterilant penetration, maintain sterility until use, and permit aseptic presentation
- C. Add weight to the tray
- D. Speed up the sterilizer

6. Sterile storage areas are kept under positive air pressure relative to adjacent areas primarily to:

- A. Increase humidity
- B. Keep airborne contaminants from entering and protect sterile items
- C. Cool the room faster
- D. Reduce lighting needs

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7. Standard precautions are based on the principle that:

- A. Only patients with known infections are infectious
- B. All blood and body fluids are treated as potentially infectious
- C. Gloves alone prevent all transmission
- D. Only the OR needs precautions

8. Manufacturer Instructions for Use (IFU) for a medical device must be followed because they:

- A. Are optional suggestions
- B. Are written for marketing
- C. List only the price
- D. Provide the validated parameters for safe, effective reprocessing

9. Which personal protective equipment is required when manually cleaning instruments at a sink in the decontamination area?

- A. A surgical gown only
- B. Sterile gloves and a cloth cap
- C. Fluid-resistant gown, gloves, mask, and eye/face protection
- D. No PPE is needed if instruments are pre-soaked

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10. Under the Spaulding classification, a critical item is one that:

- A. Enters sterile tissue or the vascular system and must be sterile
- B. Contacts only intact skin
- C. Contacts mucous membranes only
- D. Never contacts the patient

11. In a gravity-displacement steam sterilizer, air is removed from the chamber by:

- A. A vacuum pump pulling air out
- B. Chemical absorption
- C. Incoming steam displacing the heavier air downward and out a drain
- D. Compressed air injection

12. How is a needle holder typically distinguished from a hemostat on inspection?

- A. It has finer, longer jaws
- B. It usually has shorter, stronger jaws often with a cross-hatched insert to grip the needle
- C. It has no ratchet
- D. It has scissor-like blades

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13. When placing a single instrument in a paper-plastic peel pouch, it should be positioned so that:

- A. The tip points toward the sealed end
- B. The pouch is overfilled
- C. Two pouches are doubled tightly
- D. The handle/ring end is presented to the opening for aseptic presentation

14. Excessive humidity in a sterile storage area is a concern because it can:

- A. Promote moisture absorption into packaging and microbial growth, compromising sterility
- B. Make labels easier to read
- C. Improve event-related sterility
- D. Strengthen the wrap barrier

15. Hand hygiene is considered the single most important measure to:

- A. Prevent the transmission of microorganisms
- B. Sterilize instruments
- C. Replace PPE
- D. Disinfect surfaces



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16. In the United States, which agency clears or approves medical devices and their reprocessing claims?

- A. OSHA
- B. EPA
- C. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- D. The FCC

17. Why is point-of-use treatment (keeping instruments moist) important after a surgical procedure?

- A. It eliminates the need for decontamination
- B. It sterilizes the instruments at the bedside
- C. It prevents soil from drying and hardening, which makes later cleaning more difficult
- D. It allows instruments to be stored without further processing

18. Semi-critical items, such as flexible endoscopes that contact mucous membranes, at minimum require:

- A. Low-level disinfection
- B. High-level disinfection (or sterilization)
- C. Only detergent cleaning
- D. No processing

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19. A dynamic-air-removal (prevacuum) steam sterilizer removes air by:

- A. Using a vacuum system to actively pull air from the chamber before steam admission
- B. Letting steam slowly push air out by gravity
- C. Heating the air until it disappears
- D. Adding ethylene oxide

20. Mayo and Metzenbaum are types of:

- A. Scissors
- B. Clamps
- C. Retractors
- D. Forceps



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21. Sequential envelope or square-fold wrapping uses two wraps to:

- A. Provide a sterile barrier and aid aseptic opening, with a built-in redundancy
- B. Add color
- C. Increase the weight limit
- D. Replace the chemical indicator

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22. Sterile items on open shelving should be stored a specified distance off the floor primarily to:

- A. Make cleaning faster
- B. Allow forklifts
- C. Increase storage capacity
- D. Reduce contamination from floor-level dust, moisture, and cleaning, and protect items

23. Breaking the chain of infection at the 'mode of transmission' link can be accomplished by:

- A. Treating the underlying disease
- B. Giving antibiotics
- C. Hand hygiene, PPE, and proper cleaning/sterilization
- D. Isolating the host only

24. OSHA's role most directly relevant to sterile processing is to:

- A. Protect worker safety, including from bloodborne pathogens and hazardous chemicals
- B. Clear medical devices
- C. Register disinfectants
- D. Accredit hospitals

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25. Why is final rinsing of instruments often performed with treated (for example deionized or RO) water rather than tap water?

- A. Treated water is hotter and speeds drying
- B. Treated water removes the need for detergent
- C. Tap water is always contaminated with spores
- D. It reduces mineral deposits and spotting that tap water minerals can leave on instruments



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26. Which of the following is destroyed by sterilization but NOT reliably by high-level disinfection?

- A. Vegetative bacteria
- B. Most viruses
- C. Fungi
- D. Large numbers of bacterial spores

27. The Bowie-Dick test is performed in a dynamic-air-removal sterilizer each day of use to detect:

- A. Biological spore survival
- B. Air leaks or inadequate air removal/steam penetration
- C. Correct load weight
- D. Water hardness

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28. What is the function of a retractor?

- A. To clamp vessels
- B. To hold back tissue or organs to expose the surgical site
- C. To cut sutures
- D. To grasp needles

29. Guidelines commonly recommend that a wrapped instrument set generally not exceed approximately what weight to aid sterilization and drying and protect staff?

- A. About 5 pounds
- B. About 50 pounds
- C. About 25 pounds (roughly 11 kilograms)
- D. There is no recommended limit

30. The principle of stock rotation in sterile storage, using older inventory first, is known as:

- A. First in, first out (FIFO)
- B. Last in, first out
- C. Random selection
- D. Heaviest first



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Answer Key & Explanations

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1. C — From dirty (decontamination) to clean

Workflow and airflow are designed to move in one direction, from the soiled decontamination area toward the clean assembly area, to prevent recontamination of cleaned items.

2. C — Noncritical

Spaulding classifies items that touch only intact skin as noncritical; these require cleaning and low- or intermediate-level disinfection, not sterilization.

3. D — Moist heat in the form of saturated steam under pressure

Steam sterilization uses saturated steam under pressure; the moist heat denatures and coagulates microbial proteins. Pressure is used to raise steam temperature, not to kill directly.

4. D — Clamp blood vessels to control bleeding

Hemostats are clamping instruments with serrated jaws and a ratchet used to occlude (clamp) blood vessels and control bleeding; they are not cutting instruments.

5. B — Allow sterilant penetration, maintain sterility until use, and permit aseptic presentation

Packaging must let the sterilant in and contact all surfaces, then maintain the sterile barrier during storage/transport, and allow the contents to be delivered aseptically.

6. B — Keep airborne contaminants from entering and protect sterile items

Positive pressure keeps potentially contaminated air from flowing into the sterile storage area, helping protect the sterility of stored items.

7. B — All blood and body fluids are treated as potentially infectious

Standard precautions assume that blood and most body fluids from any patient may carry infectious agents, so protective practices are applied to everyone.

8. D — Provide the validated parameters for safe, effective reprocessing

IFUs contain the manufacturer's validated reprocessing parameters (cleaning, disinfection, sterilization); following them is essential and is expected by regulators and accreditors.

9. C — Fluid-resistant gown, gloves, mask, and eye/face protection

Manual cleaning generates splashes and aerosols, so technicians must wear a fluid-resistant gown, gloves, and face/eye protection to guard against exposure to blood and body fluids.

10. A — Enters sterile tissue or the vascular system and must be sterile

Critical items penetrate sterile tissue or the bloodstream (for example surgical instruments and implants) and therefore must be sterile to prevent infection.

11. C — Incoming steam displacing the heavier air downward and out a drain

In gravity-displacement cycles, incoming steam displaces the denser air downward and out through a chamber drain; this is slower and less complete than a prevacuum cycle.



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12. B — It usually has shorter, stronger jaws often with a cross-hatched insert to grip the needle

Needle holders have short, sturdy jaws, frequently with a tungsten carbide or cross-hatched insert, designed to grasp a suture needle firmly without it rotating.

13. D — The handle/ring end is presented to the opening for aseptic presentation

Items are oriented so the end that will be grasped is presented at the opening for aseptic delivery; pouches should not be overfilled, which stresses seals and impedes sterilant flow.

14. A — Promote moisture absorption into packaging and microbial growth, compromising sterility

High humidity can be absorbed by packaging and supports microbial survival; sterile storage temperature and humidity are controlled to protect package integrity and sterility.

15. A — Prevent the transmission of microorganisms

Hand hygiene (handwashing or alcohol-based hand rub) is the most important and effective measure for preventing the spread of microorganisms in healthcare.

16. C — The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The FDA regulates medical devices, including their labeling and validated reprocessing instructions; sterilizers and reusable devices are cleared/approved by the FDA.

17. C — It prevents soil from drying and hardening, which makes later cleaning more difficult

Keeping soil moist at the point of use prevents blood and debris from drying onto surfaces and lumens, which would otherwise harden and become much harder to remove during decontamination.

18. B — High-level disinfection (or sterilization)

Semi-critical items contact mucous membranes or non-intact skin and at minimum require high-level disinfection, which destroys most microorganisms except large numbers of bacterial spores.

19. A — Using a vacuum system to actively pull air from the chamber before steam admission

Prevacuum sterilizers use a vacuum pump to actively evacuate air before and/or during steam admission, allowing faster, more complete steam penetration than gravity cycles.

20. A — Scissors

Mayo and Metzenbaum are surgical scissors; Mayo scissors are heavier for tougher tissue, while Metzenbaum scissors are finer for delicate dissection.

21. A — Provide a sterile barrier and aid aseptic opening, with a built-in redundancy

Two sequential wraps (or a bonded double-layer wrap) create a tortuous path that maintains the barrier and supports aseptic presentation, with redundancy if the outer layer is compromised.

22. D — Reduce contamination from floor-level dust, moisture, and cleaning, and protect items

Storing sterile items off the floor (and away from the ceiling and outside walls) protects them from floor-level contamination, moisture, and damage during cleaning.

23. C — Hand hygiene, PPE, and proper cleaning/sterilization

The mode of transmission link is interrupted by measures such as hand hygiene, barrier PPE, and effective cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization that stop spread between source and host.

24. A — Protect worker safety, including from bloodborne pathogens and hazardous chemicals

OSHA sets and enforces workplace safety regulations, including the Bloodborne Pathogens and Hazard



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Communication standards that protect SPD workers.

25. D — It reduces mineral deposits and spotting that tap water minerals can leave on instruments

Tap water contains dissolved minerals that can cause spotting, staining, and deposits; using treated water for the final rinse reduces these residues and protects instrument surfaces.

26. D — Large numbers of bacterial spores

High-level disinfection kills most microorganisms but may not destroy large numbers of bacterial spores; sterilization is defined by its ability to destroy all microbial life including spores.

27. B — Air leaks or inadequate air removal/steam penetration

The Bowie-Dick test checks a prevacuum sterilizer's ability to remove air and achieve rapid, even steam penetration; trapped air shows as an uneven color change, indicating a problem.

28. B — To hold back tissue or organs to expose the surgical site

Retractors hold back the edges of a wound or tissues to maintain exposure of the operative field; they may be handheld or self-retaining.

29. C — About 25 pounds (roughly 11 kilograms)

A frequently cited guideline limits wrapped sets to about 25 pounds to promote adequate steam penetration and drying and to reduce ergonomic injury risk during handling.

30. A — First in, first out (FIFO)

FIFO (first in, first out) rotates stock so older sterilized items are used before newer ones, reducing the chance of items aging on the shelf and being compromised by events.



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