STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Dental Operatory Turnover SOP

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Revision	1.0
Owner	Office Manager
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Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To make sure every operatory is cleaned, disinfected and reset to the same standard between patients, reducing cross-contamination risk and keeping appointments on schedule.

2. Scope

Applies to routine turnover of general dental operatories between patients. Deep cleaning at end of day and instrument sterilization are covered by separate SOPs.

Definitions

Barrier protection	Disposable covers placed on surfaces such as light handles, chair controls and computer equipment that are hard to disinfect between patients.
Clinical contact surface	A surface touched by gloved hands or contaminated instruments during treatment, such as the chair, light handle and dental unit controls.
Turnover time	The time between one patient leaving the operatory and the next patient being seated.

3. Responsibilities

Dental Assistant	Cleans and disinfects the operatory, replaces barriers and resets the room for the next patient.
Sterilization Coordinator	Supplies sterile instrument cassettes and restocks disinfectant and barrier supplies.
Front Desk Coordinator	Confirms the next patient and operatory assignment and manages scheduling if turnover runs long.

RACI matrix

Activity	Dental Assistant	Sterilization Coordinator	Front Desk Coordinator
Remove barriers and disinfect surfaces	R/A	I	-
Replace barriers and restock supplies	R/A	C	-
Set up the next patient's instrument tray	R	R/A	-
Coordinate scheduling around	I	-	R/A

Activity	Dental Assistant	Sterilization Coordinator	Front Desk Coordinator
turnover time			

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- EPA-registered surface disinfectant
- Disposable barrier covers for light handles, chair and controls
- Sterile instrument cassette for the next procedure
- Suction line cleaner and evacuation system supplies
- Operatory turnover checklist

Personal protective equipment

- Disposable gloves
- Mask and eye protection
- Protective gown

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Escort the patient out and don PPE** Walk the patient to the front desk, then put on gloves, mask and eye protection before touching any contaminated surface in the operatory.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.2	**Remove used instruments and cassette** Remove the used instrument cassette and any loose instruments, and transport them to the sterilization area in a covered container.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.3	**Remove barriers and dispose of waste** Remove all used barrier covers and dispose of them along with other clinical waste in the correct waste stream, including biohazard waste where applicable.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.4	**Flush the suction and water lines** Run the recommended flush cycle on suction lines and dental unit waterlines between patients according to the manufacturer's instructions.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.5	**Clean visible debris from surfaces** Wipe visible debris and spatter from the chair, light, bracket table and counters before applying disinfectant.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.6	**Disinfect clinical contact surfaces** Apply an EPA-registered surface disinfectant to every clinical contact surface, keeping the surface visibly wet for the full contact time on the product label. **Checkpoint:** Every clinical contact surface stays visibly wet for the disinfectant's full contact time before it is touched again.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.7	**Apply new barrier covers** Place fresh barrier covers on the light handle, chair switches, headrest, bracket table and any other high-touch surface that will contact gloved hands.	Dental Assistant	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.8	**Set up the sterile instrument tray** Retrieve the correctly labeled sterile instrument cassette for the scheduled procedure and set it up on the bracket table without opening it early. **Checkpoint:** The instrument package is checked for intact packaging and a valid sterilization indicator before it is opened.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.9	**Restock consumable supplies** Restock gloves, masks, cotton rolls, anesthetic supplies and any procedure-specific materials needed for the next patient.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.10	**Prepare the chart and imaging** Pull up the next patient's chart, treatment plan and any needed radiographs in the practice management system before the patient is seated.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.11	**Confirm the operatory is ready** Do a final visual check of the room against the turnover checklist before signaling the front desk that the operatory is ready.	Dental Assistant	☐
5.12	**Manage scheduling if turnover runs long** If turnover is taking longer than the scheduled gap, notify the front desk immediately so they can adjust the next patient's wait or reschedule if necessary.	Front Desk Coordinator	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every clinical contact surface is disinfected for the full contact time between patients.
- Barrier covers are replaced on 100 percent of turnovers, with none reused.
- Instrument packages are checked for intact packaging before opening.
- Average turnover time stays within the schedule's built-in gap.

7. Records

- Operatory turnover checklist
- Waterline and suction line flush log
- Disinfectant and barrier supply inventory
- Turnover time tracking log

8. KPIs

- Average operatory turnover time
- Percentage of turnovers completed within the scheduled gap
- Barrier and disinfectant compliance rate during audits
- Cross-contamination-related incident reports

9. Common mistakes

- Wiping off disinfectant before the full contact time has passed.
- Reusing a barrier cover for more than one patient.
- Skipping the waterline or suction line flush between patients.
- Opening the sterile instrument package before the patient is seated and ready.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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