Barriers

A Simple Method for Barrier Protecting a Computer Mouse (12/06)

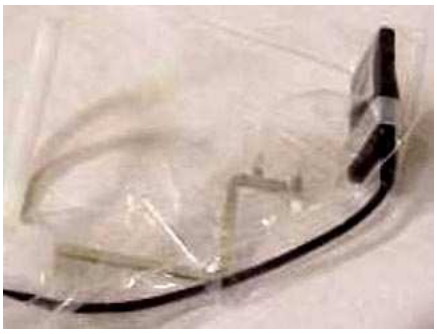
Question: We recently placed computers in each dental operatory for digital radiography. Do you have any suggestions for barrier-protecting the computer mouse?

Answer: Yes. Recently, I received a helpful hint from the field regarding this issue. Use a headrest cover and stick your gloved hand into the headrest cover, then use the mouse normally. The mouse is outside the headrest cover and is not covered. After removing your hand from the headrest cover, attempt to keep it propped open so you can place your hand back into it if necessary. This method is straightforward and cost-effective.

Return to Top

Preventing Contamination of Digital Radiography Sensors/Plates (Updated 4/08)

Question: Is it better to barrier-protect digital radiography sensors/plates or disinfect them between each patient?



Answer: Digital radiography sensors or plates come into contact with mucous membranes and are considered semicritical devices. Ideally, therefore they should be cleaned and heat-sterilized or high-level disinfected between patients. At this time, however, there are no sensors or plates that can withstand heat sterilization or complete immersion in a high-level disinfectant. These devices should, at a minimum, be barrier protected by using an FDA-cleared barrier to reduce gross contamination during use. However, use of a barrier does not always protect from contamination. One study determined that a brand of commercially available plastic barriers used to protect dental digital radiography sensors failed at a substantial rate (44%).

This rate dropped to 6% when latex finger cots were used in conjunction with the plastic barrier. To minimize the potential for patient cross-contamination, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends cleaning and disinfecting the sensor/plate with an EPA-registered intermediate-level (tuberculocidal) disinfectant after removing the barrier and before use on another patient. Because the sensors/plates and associated computer components vary by manufacturer and are expensive, manufacturers should be consulted regarding specific disinfection products and procedures.

References

CDC. Guidelines for infection control in dental health-care settings – 2003. MMWR 2003; 52(No. RR-17):1–66.
Hokett SD, Honey JR, Ruiz F, Baisden MK, Hoen MM. Assessing the effectiveness of direct digital radiography barrier sheaths and finger cots. J Am Dent Assoc 2000;131:463–467.

Return to Top

Barrier Protectors for Dispensing Syringes and Mixing Guns (Originally published in Dec 1996)

Question: Many dental materials are delivered using small syringes or mixing guns that are handled frequently during the course of treatment. These devices are hard to clean and disinfect. Are there any barrier products available that would reduce cross contamination?

Answer: Ultradent Products, Inc. has introduced syringe covers (Ultradent Syringe Covers) that intimately fit their 1.2-mL delivery syringes. Although not as well suited for other commonly-used syringes, they can be stretched to fit products from other companies. For pricing information, contact Ultradent at (800) 552-5512 or (801) 572-4200.

Return to Top