

Chapter 4 Infection Control

It is important to observe infection control practices when taking dental images to prevent the spread of microorganisms to patients and dental staff. During dental imaging procedures, the dental assistant's gloves, receptors, X-ray equipment, and surfaces in the dental operatory can become contaminated.

When you place a sensor in a patient's mouth and then make adjustments to the X-ray head or press the exposure button, you contaminate the X-ray unit. If the equipment is not properly disinfected or covered with a barrier, it is a potential source of cross-contamination. Infection control standards must be maintained to protect patients and dental staff.

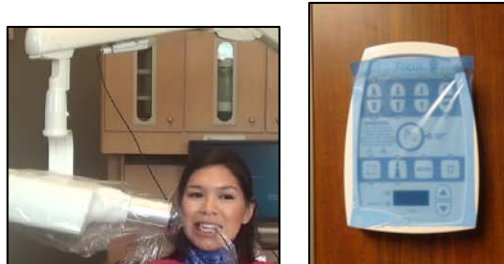
As with other dental procedures, the operatory surfaces and dental chair should be decontaminated or barriers placed according to your dental clinic infection control policies. You should follow handwashing protocols, and wear personal protection equipment (PPE).



Let's review some of the specific infection control practices when taking dental images.

Barriers

Use barriers on the X-ray head and control panel buttons. It is quicker to protect them with a barrier than to disinfect them after each patient. Barriers are changed when cleaning up the operatory for another patient.



Receptors and XCP

Use barriers to cover the receptor and cord. Check and follow manufacturer's instructions when you disinfect receptors. The XCP should be sterilized after use.



Protective Devices (Apron and Thyroid Collar)

Make it a routine practice, to disinfect the apron and thyroid collar after use. This will ensure that the protective devices are always ready for a patient use. Be aware that some ingredients in disinfectants may be harmful to equipment when used long term. It is always a good practice to read the manufacturer's instructions before using a product.

Handwashing and Gloves

An acceptable handwashing procedure should be followed before putting on gloves. PPE must be worn when taking dental images.



Panoramic Bite Stick and Temple Supports

Disposable bite stick covers should be used when taking panoramic images. If disposable covers are not available, bite sticks should be sterilized. Temple supports should not be sterilized. Instead, use barriers.



Phosphor Storage Plates (PSPs)

To comply with infection control practices when using PSP, follow these steps:

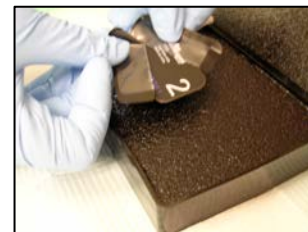
1. Before putting on gloves, place PSPs in plastic barriers, and attach bitewing tabs.
2. Wash hands, put on gloves, and take images.
3. Before taking off gloves, remove and dispose of barriers and bitewing tabs.
4. Gently place exposed PSPs into the box to transport to the processor.
5. Remove gloves and wash hands.



Putting PSP in barrier.



Removal of tab while wearing gloves.

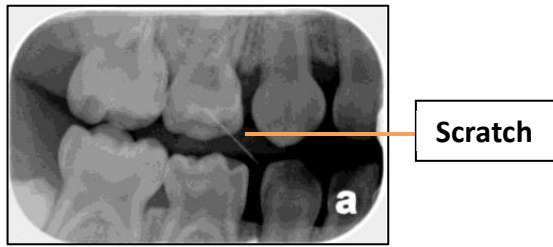


Placing PSP into box to transport to processor.



PSP Processor

Be careful when handling PSPs because they can be easily scratched from operator's fingernails or by laying PSPs on a counter or handling during processing.



PSP with scratch

Tip: PSPs should be cleared before using again. Check with manufacturer's instructions for information about the number of times a PSP can be re-used.

Tip: The blue side of the PSP is sensitive to light, and may reduce the quality of the image if exposed to light for too long. Check the manufacturer's instructions.

This completes Chapter 4: Infection Control. You are now ready to test your understanding of the information you learned.