

Section Subject	UTMB On-line Documentation Healthcare Epidemiology Policies and Procedures	01.12 - Policy
Topic	01.12 - Expiration Dates for Sterile Items	2/20/2025 - Revised 1981 - Author

01.12 - Expiration Dates for Sterile Items

- Purpose** To assure sterility of patient care items
- Audience** All employees of UTMB hospitals, clinics, outpatient surgical center, contract workers, volunteers, and students who use sterile items
- Policy**
1. Sterility of a packaged item is event related and depends on the quality of the wrapper material, the storage conditions, the conditions during transport, and the amount of handling. Any item that has a torn wrapper, has been compressed, appears wet, or has been dropped on the floor should not be used.
 2. Items purchased as sterile should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions for use (MIFU). This may be either a designated expiration date, or a day-to-day expiration date such as "sterile unless the integrity of the package is compromised."
 3. Sterile items that do not have an expiration date will follow the event-related sterility guidelines.
 4. The determination of whether items packaged in house are sterile prior to use will be event related. It is the responsibility of each health care worker (HCW) to assess each package and its contents to ensure that sterile conditions have been maintained. Special attention will be paid to:
 - The outside of the package to make sure that the integrity of the sterile wrap has not been compromised.
 - Medications, antiseptics and other materials inside the pack that have manufacturers' expiration dates. These will need to be assessed prior to use of the contents of the package.
 - Rubber and plastic items will need to be visually inspected by the user for cracks, peeling and discoloration.
 - If the sterile wrap is not 100% intact, or the contents show deterioration or are out of date, the pack contents should not be used.
 - Peel packages may be used as a single wrapper. If woven or non-woven material is to be used, it is acceptable to have double thickness without sequential wrapping or double thickness that is bonded together.
 - Sterile items should be stored in limited access areas with controlled temperature and relative humidity. Temperature may be as high as 75°F. Relative humidity should range between 30-60% in all work areas except for sterile storage where relative humidity should not exceed 70%.

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References

1. Guidelines for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities (2008). Updated Sept 18, 2016 [Sterilizing Practices | Infection Control | CDC](#)