# Sterilization Test Failure?

## YOUR STEP-BY-STEP COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

**Remove the sterilizer from service**

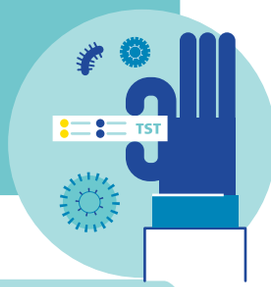
**Recall and quarantine** any implantable items and do not use them until they are shown to be sterile. Items other than implantable items do not necessarily need to be recalled.

**Review sterilizer operating procedures** to determine potential reasons for the failed test.

### What causes a sterilization failure?

Mechanical, chemical, or biological monitoring failures can be caused by a number of issues, including but not limited to:

- Improper cleaning of instruments,
- Incorrect operation of sterilizer,
- Improper loading or overloading of the sterilizer,
- Improper packaging,
- Improper packaging material selected for the method of sterilization.



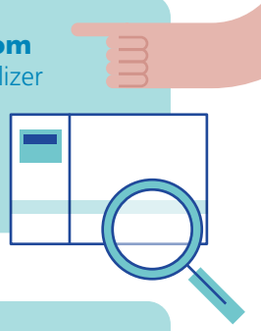

**If procedural problems are detected...**

Make the necessary changes; re-train team members of the actions/ measures to prevent future test failures; Document changes in OnTraq.

**If procedural problems are not detected...**

**Repeat the spore test immediately** using the same cycle that produced the positive spore test.

**Remove the sterilizer from service.** Do not use the sterilizer until it has been inspected, repaired, and re-challenged. Document any repairs.



**If the repeat test is negative** and chemical and mechanical monitors suggest adequate processing…

**If the repeat test is positive...**

When possible, items from suspect loads dating back to the last negative spore test should be **recalled, rewrapped, and re-sterilized.**

**Put the sterilizer back in service**
Document return service date in OnTraq.

**After servicing...** Upon obtaining negative spore test results in 3 consecutive fully loaded chamber sterilization cycles.

HealthFirst

Flowchart based on CDC Best Practices for Sterilization Monitoring in Dental Settings: cdc.gov/dental-infection-control/hcp/dental-ipc-faqs/sterilization-monitoring.html (as of May 15 2024) Reference: 9316 v003 03/2025

11339 v001 05/2025