



Cleaning and Disinfecting Articulators and Face-bows

This letter is intended to provide you with general guidelines for proper cleaning and disinfecting of Whip Mix Articulator and Face-bow instrumentation. Individual work centers may supersede the instructions provided. Specific brand names for cleaning and disinfection material are left up to the discretion of individual work centers.

The guidelines for cleaning articulator and face-bow instrumentation follow the CDC recommendations from the 2003 “**Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health Care Settings**”. Under the heading “**Sterilization and Disinfection of Patient-Care items**” patient-care items (dental instruments, devices and equipment) are categorized as critical, semi-critical or non-critical.

Critical items used to penetrate soft tissue or bone has the greatest risk of transmitting infection and should be sterilized by heat.

Semi-critical items touch mucous membranes or non-intact skin and have a lower risk of transmission; because the majority of semi-critical items in dentistry are heat-tolerant, they also should be sterilized by using heat. If a semi-critical item is heat-sensitive, it should be, at a minimum, processed with a high-level disinfection. **Non-critical** items pose the least risk of transmission of infection, contacting only intact skin, which can serve as an effective barrier to microorganisms.

According to this guideline only the face-bow bite fork falls under the semi-critical category. All other parts of the articulator and face-bow fall under the non-critical category.

For sterilization purposes it is recommended that you follow these guidelines:

1. Clean and heat-sterilize heat-tolerant items used in the mouth (e.g. face-bow forks). 2. Follow manufacturers' instructions for cleaning and sterilizing or disinfecting items that become contaminated but do not normally contact the patient (e.g. articulators). If manufacturer instructions are unavailable, clean and heat-sterilize heat-tolerant items or clean and disinfect with an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant with low- (HIV, HBV effectiveness claim) to intermediate-level (tuberculocidal claim) activity, depending on the degree of contamination. Due to the availability of several different models of sterilization and autoclaving equipment on the market it is important that you follow their recommendations for time and temperature for the materials being sterilized.

For further guidance I am providing you with additional information on cleaning, disinfecting and sterilization procedures for most commonly used Whip Mix articulators and face-bows in the dental laboratory.



General cleaning and disinfecting instructions for Whip Mix branded articulators and face-bows

Articulator:

1. Use mild soap and water solution with the aid of a brush to dissolve accumulations of wax and to wash away carborundum grit. Then air dry completely. **DO NOT** use strong detergents, alkalies, gasoline or naphtha as cleaning agents.
2. Remove excess stone to prevent corrosion of articulator surfaces.
3. Apply a light coating of silicone spray to articulator surface to prevent plaster or stone from sticking.
4. Lubricate working and bearing components with a thin film of lubricant (Whip Mix Lubriplate) or silicone to the surface upon which the condylar elements move to provide a smooth action during movements.
5. Clean and disinfect with an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant with low to intermediate-level (tuberculocidal claim) activity.

Face-bows:

1. Clean and properly disinfect the face-bow apparatus before each use.
2. A finger cot placed over each earpiece will help facilitate proper disinfection of the face-bow.
3. Since the bite fork is made out of metal and is the only part used inside the oral cavity it should be sterilized by using heat according to approved CDC guidelines. **Sterilize the bitefork before each use.** The metal bitefork and vertical shaft can be sterilized in an autoclave. Since the bite fork is made out of metal and is the only part used inside the oral cavity it should be sterilized before each use. Due to the availability of several different models of sterilization and autoclaving equipment on the market it is important that you follow their recommendations for time and temperature for the materials being sterilized, but do not exceed 375° F or 30 minutes. Cold sterilize the ear pieces.



General cleaning and disinfecting instructions for Hanau branded articulators and face-bows

Articulator:

1. Use mild soap and water solution with the aid of a brush to dissolve accumulations of wax and to wash away carborundum grit. Air dry and lubricate. DO NOT use strong detergents, alkalies, gasoline or naphtha as cleaning agents.
2. Remove excess stone to prevent corrosion of articulator surfaces.
3. A thin coating of petroleum jelly must be applied to all articulator surfaces that will be contacted by the gypsum mounting material.
4. Lubricate the working and bearing components with thin film of sewing machine or high speed handpiece type oil. Wipe off excess oil to prevent accumulations of dust or grit.
5. Clean and disinfect with an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant with low to intermediate-level (tuberculocidal claim) activity.

Face-bows:

1. The Springbow may be made sterile via steam autoclave.
2. The metal bitefork, vertical shaft and earpieces can be sterilized in an autoclave. Since the bite fork is made out of metal and is the only part used inside the oral cavity it should be sterilized by using heat according to approved CDC guidelines. **Sterilize the bite fork before each use.** Due to the availability of several different models of sterilization and autoclaving equipment on the market it is important that you follow their recommendations for time and temperature for the materials being sterilized.
3. Clean and properly disinfect the face-bow apparatus before each use using an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant with low to intermediate-level (tuberculocidal claim) activity.
4. A finger cot placed over each earpiece will help facilitate proper disinfection of the face-bow.



General cleaning and disinfecting instructions for Denar branded articulators and face-bows

Articulator:

1. Use mild soap and water solution with the aid of a brush to dissolve accumulations of wax and to wash away carborundum grit. Air dry and lubricate. DO NOT use strong detergents, alkalies, gasoline or naphtha as cleaning agents.
2. Remove excess stone to prevent corrosion of articulator surfaces.
3. A thin coating of petroleum jelly must be applied to all articulator surfaces that will be contacted by the gypsum mounting material.
4. Lubricate the working and bearing components with thin film of sewing machine or high speed handpiece type oil. Wipe off excess oil to prevent accumulations of dust or grit.
5. Clean and disinfect with an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant with low to intermediate-level (tuberculocidal claim) activity.

Face-bows:

1. The metal bitefork, vertical shaft and earpieces can be sterilized in an autoclave. Since the bite fork is made out of metal and is the only part used inside the oral cavity it should be sterilized by using heat according to approved CDC guidelines.
Sterilize the bite fork before each use. The metal bitefork and vertical shaft can be sterilized in an autoclave. Since the bite fork is made out of metal and is the only part used inside the oral cavity it should be sterilized before each use. Due to the availability of several different models of sterilization and autoclaving equipment on the market it is important that you follow their recommendations for time and temperature for the materials being sterilized, but do not exceed 375° F or 30 minutes. Cold sterilize the ear pieces.
2. The black finger screws and the spacers should be removed from the Shaft Assembly before autoclaving. Clean and disinfect with an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant with low to intermediate-level (tuberculocidal claim) activity.
3. Clean and properly disinfect the face-bow apparatus before each use. Do not autoclave the bow with level attached.
4. A finger cot placed over each earpiece will help facilitate proper disinfection of the face-bow.