



INFECTION CONTROL PROTOCOL FOR THE AUDIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

It is important to be aware of situations that may expose the patient and/or the health care provider to infectious viruses or disease. Clinical items and medical equipment have the potential to transmit infectious germs among patients and health care providers, which could lead to serious diseases. It is essential to have an understanding of the procedures required to protect the audiology staff and their patients. First, it is necessary to distinguish between critical and non-critical audiology equipment.

Critical Audiology Equipment – must be cleaned and sterilized after each use. Critical Audiology Equipment is defined as objects that touch blood, mucous, ear drainage, cerumen, or other bodily fluids. Critical Audiology Equipment utilized in this clinic consists of:

- Probe Ear Tips
- Ear Lights (used for otoblock insertion)

Non-Critical Audiology Equipment – will be cleaned and disinfected using disposable germicidal pre-moistened cloths, or hospital-grade disinfectant/detergent that is tuberculocidal and registered by the EPA. Recommend using disposable equipment, headphone covers, etc.

Non-Critical Audiology Equipment in this clinic consists of:

- Headphones
- Headbands
- Bone Conduction Oscillator
- Hand Switch Response Buttons
- Ear Gauges
- Ear Impression Syringes
- Hearing Aid Stethoscope
- Environmental Surfaces in Patient Care Areas (tables & chairs)

Protocol

- Use disposable earphone covers made of anti-viral, acoustically transparent material.



- Use medical-grade alcohol wipes, as alcohol kills most pathogens. The down side of alcohol wipes is that it degrades earphone cushions in 1-3 years. Alcohol is a disinfectant, but it “chemically denatures acrylic, rubber, silicone and plastic.”
- Use a non-alcohol-based disinfectant, such as one with the active ingredient quaternary ammonium, because it doesn’t have the drawbacks of alcohol but retains the benefit of being a wide-range disinfectant.
- Baby wipes are NOT acceptable
- It is critical to ensure that no liquid/moisture from the wipes or disinfectant gets into the transducer of the headphones, as this is a major cause of equipment damage.
- Only the ear cushions and headband should be cleaned, while avoiding the diaphragm where the sensitive electronics are located.
- When cleaning, disinfecting, and/or sterilizing equipment or patient care areas, gloves should be worn at all times.
- This clinic utilizes full-strength _____ sanitizing material to clean, disinfect and sterilize Audiology Equipment and Environmental Surfaces.
- An Ultrasonic cleaner is utilized to clean Audiology equipment and instruments. Instruments are immersed in disinfectant solution for up to 45 minutes. Items are then rinsed under warm, running water, allowed to air dry, inspected for cleanliness, and returned to clinic supply/stock.
- Environmental surfaces are wiped down with disinfectant and allowed to air dry.

We are committed to maintaining a safe environment for our patients. All near misses, adverse events, errors and mishaps will be reported to the Diseases Intervention Specialist or the Preventive Medicine Clinic/Department.

This is the best and most current information we have on this topic at this time:

<http://www.caohc.org/updatearticles/spring2012/infection-control.php>