

**Nurses International  
Clinical Skills  
Information Sheet 'Principles of Sterile Technique'**

<b>Procedure</b>
<b>Perform hand hygiene.</b>
<b>Protect the sterile field during the procedure.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Instruct the client to refrain from sudden movements or touching, laughing, sneezing, or talking over the sterile field.</li></ul>
<b>Choose appropriate PPE.</b>
<b>Set up a sterile field.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Check the expiration date of sterile materials and assess for intactness and dryness prior to use.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid any torn, previously opened, or wet packaging, or packaging that has been dropped on the floor (as it is considered as unsterile)</li></ul> <p>Note: All objects within the sterile field must be sterile. Commercially packaged sterile supplies are marked as sterile.</p>
<b>The sterile object becomes non-sterile when touched by a non-sterile object.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that all non-sterile objects are kept within a one-inch diameter around the sterile field</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Touch sterile objects only with sterile equipment or sterile gloves</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Liquids or solution bottles are not inside the sterile field</li></ul>
<b>Sterile items that are below the waist level or items held below waist level, are considered to be non-sterile.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep all sterile equipment and sterile gloves above waist level.</li></ul> <p>(Consider table drapes at the waist level as sterile)</p>
<b>Keep the sterile field in the sight to avoid contamination.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Faces sterile field and refrains from turning back towards it.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does not walk away from the sterile field</li></ul>
<b>Avoid contamination while adding the sterile object in the sterile field:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Set up sterile trays as close to the time of use as possible.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Drop the sterile equipment on the sterile field making sure the sterile field is not contaminated.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Stay organized and complete procedures as soon as possible.</li></ul>

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- Place large items on the sterile field using sterile gloves or sterile transfer forceps.
- Sterile equipment is protected from airborne microorganisms by keeping preventing prolonged exposure during the procedure

**Keep the sterile surface dry and replace the package if wet or torn:**

- Consider the surface to be unsterile if any puncture, moisture, or tear that passes through a sterile barrier.
- Once a sterile field is set up, the border of one inch at the edge of the sterile drape is considered non-sterile.
- Place all objects inside the sterile field and away from the one-inch border.

**Sterile persons or objects contact sterile areas; non-sterile persons or items contact only non-sterile areas.**

- The front of the sterile gown is sterile between the shoulders and the waist, and from the sleeves to two inches below the elbow.
- Non-sterile items should not cross over the sterile field. Do not reach over the sterile field.
- When opening sterile equipment, follow best practices for adding supplies to a sterile field to avoid contamination.
- Do not place non-sterile items in the sterile field.

**Control movement around the sterile field:**

- Do not sneeze, cough, laugh, or talk over the sterile field.
- Maintain a safe space or margin of safety between sterile and non-sterile objects and areas.
- Refrain from reaching over the sterile field.
- Keep operating room (OR) traffic to a minimum, and keep doors closed.
- Keep your hair tied back.
- When pouring sterile solutions, only the lip and inner cap of the pouring container is considered sterile. The pouring container must not touch any part of the sterile field. Avoid splashes.

**Reference:**

Doyle. G. R., McCutcheon. J. A. (2015). Clinical Procedures for Safer Patient Care. Victoria, BC: BCcampus. Retrieved on 16th of December, 2020 from <https://opentextbc.ca/clinicalskills/>