



Handling Extracted Teeth

How should I dispose of extracted teeth?

OSHA considers extracted teeth to be potentially infectious material that should be disposed of as regulated medical waste in biohazard bags.¹ However, please see discussion below regarding teeth containing amalgam.

What if I need to send the extracted teeth to a dental laboratory?

Extracted teeth sent to a dental laboratory for shade or size comparisons, should be cleaned and surface disinfected with an EPA-registered hospital disinfectant with intermediate-level activity.

Can I return an extracted tooth to the patient?

Extracted teeth may be returned to patients upon request.²

Can extracted teeth be used for educational purposes?

Yes, after completing the following steps:

- 1- Clean the teeth of visible blood and gross debris.
- 2- Store the teeth in a liquid chemical germicide, (e.g., glutaraldehyde, 5.25% sodium hypochlorite)*. This will disinfect the teeth and keep them hydrated; however, the interior pulp tissues will not be disinfected.^{3,4} Autoclaving the extracted teeth for 40 minutes (unless they contain amalgam) or immersion in 10% formalin solution for 7 days should be effective in disinfecting both the internal and external structures of the teeth.*^{3,5}
Phenol, an iodophor diluted according to manufacturer directions, and a 1:10 dilution of sodium hypochlorite are ineffective disinfectants.^{3,5}
- 3- Keep the teeth in a well-constructed container with a secure lid to prevent leaking during transport.^{1,2}
- 4- Label the container with the biohazard symbol.

How do I dispose of extracted teeth containing dental amalgam?

Extracted teeth containing amalgam should not be placed in a medical waste container that uses incineration for final disposal. Contact a [commercial metal recycling company](#) at http://www.ada.org/prof/resources/topics/topics_amalrecyclers.pdf.

Consult state and local regulations regarding disposal of amalgam.

* Pantera and Shuster demonstrated elimination of microbial growth using an autoclave cycle for 40 minutes. Autoclaving teeth for preclinical laboratory exercises does not alter their physical properties sufficiently to compromise the learning experience. Extracted teeth containing amalgam restorations should not be heat sterilized.



American Dental Association
www.ada.org

- ¹ US Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. 29 CFR Part 1910.1030. Occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens; final rule.
- ² US Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Enforcement procedures for the Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens CPL 2–2.69; November 27, 2001.
http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=DIRECTIVES&p_id=2570
- ³ Tate WH, White RR. Disinfection of human teeth for educational purposes. J Dent Educ 1991;55:583-5.
- ⁴ Pantera EA Jr, Zambon JJ, Shih-Levine, M. Indirect immunofluorescence for the detection of Bacteroides species in human dental pulp. J Endodontics 1988;14(5):218-23.
- ⁵ Dominici JT, Eleazer PD, Clark SJ, Staat RH, Scheetz. Disinfection/sterilization of extracted teeth for dental use. J Dent Educ 2001;65:1278-1280.

Document Created November 2003

© 2003 American Dental Association