

# Sterile Technique

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Some procedures you do at home require sterile technique. The purpose of using sterile technique is to prevent infection. The word sterile means free from germs. People who are ill are at more risk for infection, so using sterile technique can lower their risk. Rules for sterile technique to keep in mind are listed below.

## Rules for sterile technique

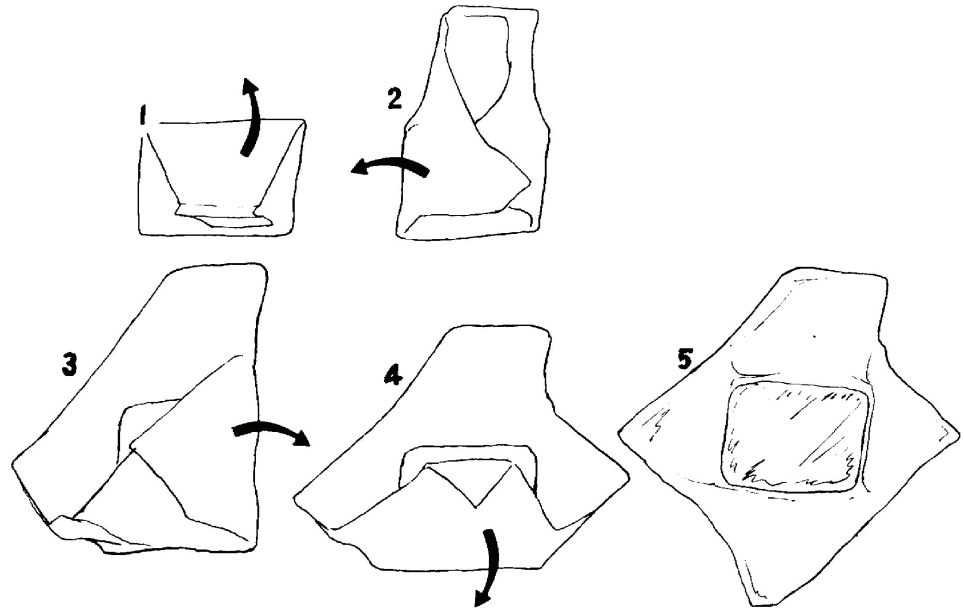
- Always wash your hands **before and after** doing any sterile procedure.
- Sterile supplies must be kept dry. **If the outer wrapper is not sealed, do not use the kit.** It is not sterile.
- Prepare a work area by washing the counter or table with a disinfectant spray or soap and water. **Make sure the surface is dry** before you put the sterile supplies down.
- Special care must be taken when you handle supplies to keep them sterile. **Touch only the outside wrapper, not the sterile supplies with ungloved hands.** Your nurse will show you how to keep the supplies sterile.
- Do not sneeze or cough on the supplies.
- Try not to reach over the sterile supplies when doing the procedure. It may be best to have your work surface off to the side.
- No fans should be on when opening the kit or doing sterile technique.
- Put on a mask if you are instructed to use one. Anyone else in the room will also need to wear a mask.

## Opening a sterile kit or tray

- ☐ **If the kit is in a bag and there is a paper wrapper around the kit,** follow these steps:
  1. Open the outside bag or wrapper.
  2. Place the kit on a clean work surface.
  3. Turn the kit, so the top flap will open away from you.

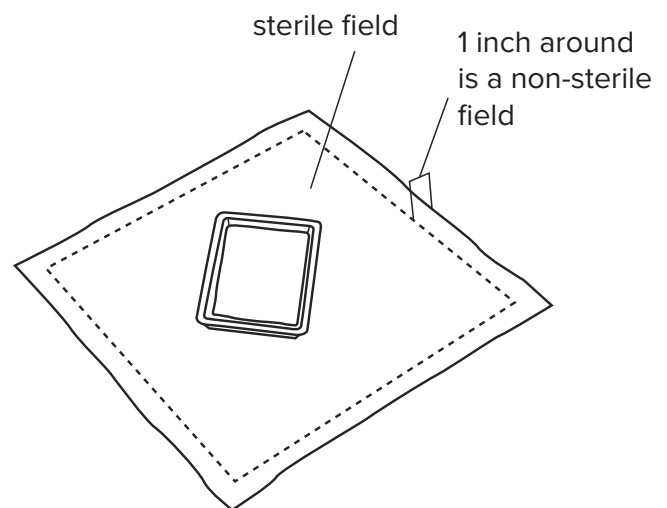


4. Unfold the sterile paper wrapper on the kit or tray. Always open the flap away from you. Pinch up the paper on the first flap and lay it back, being careful not to touch the inside of the flap. Repeat until all flaps are open. See pictures as a guide.



5. The kit or tray contents are sterile. The paper wrapper around the kit is sterile except for the 1 inch around the edge. This is often called your sterile field.

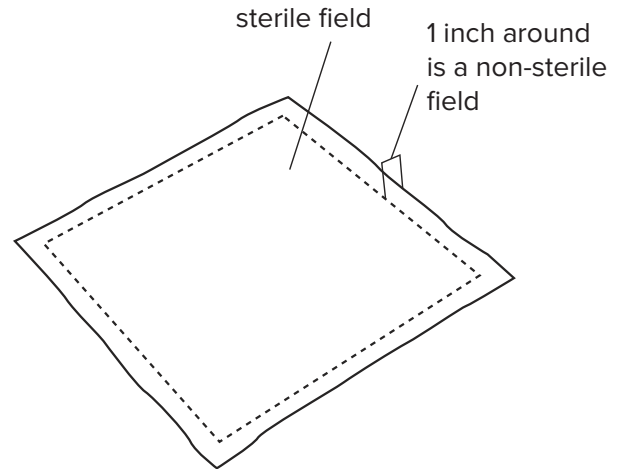
- It is okay to touch the 1 inch around the edge (non-sterile field) without sterile gloves.



**□ If your kit or tray is in a bag and has a cover that peels off, follow these steps:**

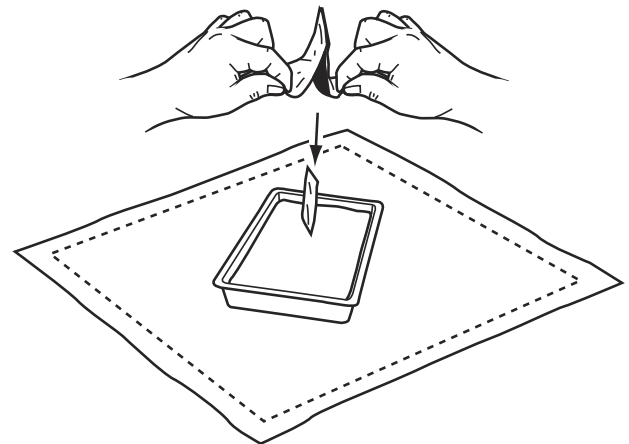
1. Open the outside bag or wrapper.
2. Place the kit or tray on a clean work surface.
3. Turn the kit or tray, so the cover flap will open away from you and peel off the cover. Be careful not to touch the inside of the kit or tray.
4. The kit and tray contents are sterile. The outside of the kit or tray is not sterile.

5. Pull the package with the sterile paper sheet open. If the sterile sheet is in the kit, carefully pinch the top of it and lift it up and out of the kit.
6. Carefully open out the paper sheet to make a sterile place for your other supplies. Pinch the paper sheet at the back of one corner and lift the sheet, being careful not to touch the sheet against anything else.
7. Grab the back of the other corner and open out the paper sheet.
8. Lay the paper sheet, with the back side you are holding, down on the clean surface to make your sterile field. Be careful not to touch the front of the sheet. The sheet is sterile except for the 1 inch around the edge. It is okay to touch the 1 inch around the edge (non-sterile field) without sterile gloves.



## Adding items to your sterile field

If you need to add sterile dressings or other items to your field, open the outer package. Holding the outer package, drop the item, so it lands near the center of your field. Throw the outer wrapper away.



## Put on the sterile gloves

### Opening the Package

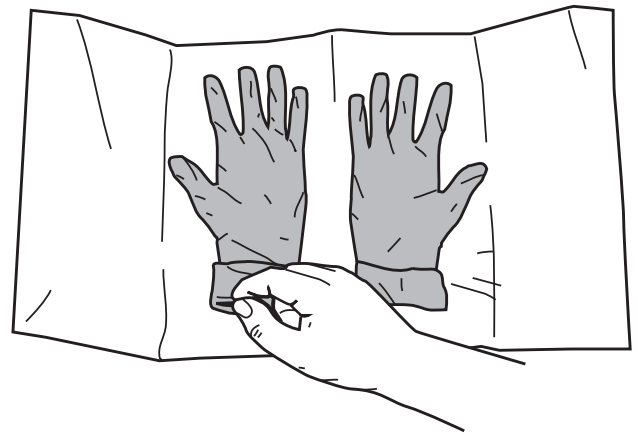
Sterile gloves may be wrapped inside your sterile tray or packaged on their own.

- **Packaged inside the sterile tray on top of supplies:**
  - Wash your hands.
  - Open your sterile dressing tray.
  - Take the sterile gloves out of the tray by pinching the middle of the paper the gloves are wrapped in.
  - Put the paper on a clean dry surface. Do not put the paper on your sterile supply wrapper.

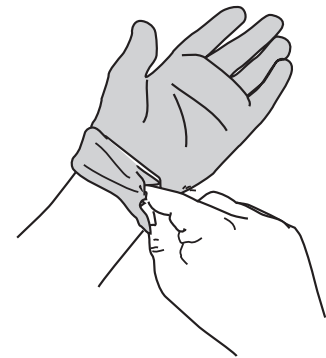
- **Packaged in a paper wrapper separate from the sterile tray:**
  - Wash your hands.
  - Open the outer wrap of the sterile glove pack.
  - Take out the inner wrap.
  - Put the wrapped sterile gloves on a clean, dry surface like a table or counter top. Do not put the wrapped gloves on the sterile supply wrapper.

## Putting on the Gloves

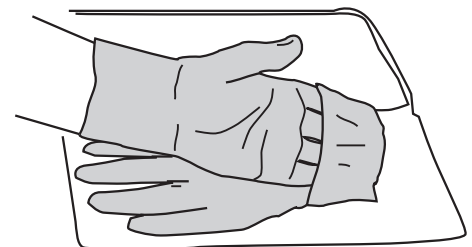
1. Open the wrapper, so you can see both gloves. With the hand you usually write with, grasp the opposite glove at the folded edge of the cuff. Pick the glove up by the folded edge.



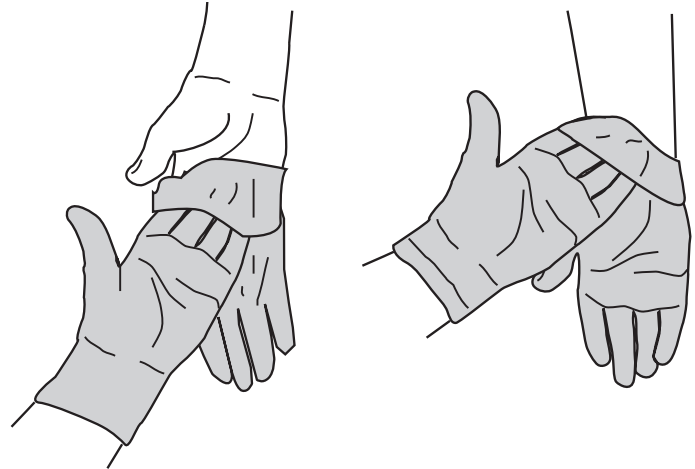
2. Slip your hand into the glove. Keep your hand flat and your thumb tucked in. Pull the glove on. Be careful not to touch the outside of the glove. Touch only the part of the glove that will be next to your skin. Leave the cuff on the glove folded.



3. With your gloved hand, slip your fingers into the folded cuff of the other glove. Pick up the second glove.



4. Slip the glove over your fingers. Keep the hand that you are putting the glove on flat. Keep the gloved thumb up and back to keep from touching your bare palm or wrist.
5. Pull the glove over your hand.
6. Adjust each glove to get a snug fit. Reach under the cuffed part to pull up or adjust.
7. Once you have your gloves on, keep your hands in front of you and above your waist. Do not touch anything outside the sterile field.



## Follow the instructions for your care

You are now ready to care for yourself as your healthcare provider has instructed.

**Call your provider if you are having trouble using sterile technique or if you have any symptoms of infection, such as:**

- Bleeding or bruising
- Swelling
- Chills or fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher
- Redness
- Foul smelling drainage or pus

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions about your care.**

For more health information, go to [wexnermedical.osu.edu/patiented](https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/patiented) or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).