

## AT A GLANCE

# Classes of Equipment and Instruments

This document is an excerpt from the [Guide to Infection Prevention and Control in Personal Service Settings](#). It defines the various classifications of equipment/instruments based on the intended and actual use and indicates the associated level of reprocessing for each classification. For more information, please consult the full Guide, visit the [IPAC in Personal Service Settings webpage](#) or email [ipac@oahpp.ca](mailto:ipac@oahpp.ca).

Item Classification	Critical	Semi-critical (or Items That Hold/Contact Critical Items)	Non-critical, Intermediate-Level Disinfection	Non-critical, Low-Level Disinfection
Method of reprocessing	Sterilization	High-level disinfection	Intermediate-level disinfection	Low-level disinfection
Definition	Equipment and instruments or items that penetrate the skin or enter sterile tissue. Also, some other tattoo, piercing, or body-modification equipment with high risk of transmission if contaminated.	Equipment and instruments or items that contact mucous membranes or non-intact skin (i.e., skin that has been compromised in some way, such as cracked, chapped, with cuts, abraded, or with a rash), but do not ordinarily penetrate the skin. Also includes items that hold, manipulate or contact critical items.	Equipment and instruments or items that are intended to contact only intact skin, but that may accidentally come into contact with non-intact skin or mucous membranes, or penetrate the skin.	Equipment and instruments or items that do not directly contact the client, or contact only hair or intact skin.
Rationale	These items present a high risk of transmission of microorganisms if contaminated.	These items contact areas where the level of protection is less than that of intact skin. Also, items that hold or contact critical items could lead to transmission of microorganisms if cross-contamination occurs.	These items present a higher risk of transmission of microorganisms than other non-critical items.	These items present a low risk of transmission of microorganisms.

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