

Sterilization — refers to the absence of all living forms

Disinfection is the killing of many, **but not all**, microorganisms. It does not include the **destruction of spores**. The term ‘disinfectant’ is reserved for chemicals applied to **inanimate surfaces** (*lab tops, counter tops, headrests, light handles, etc.*). They **are not** considered safe for use on living tissue.

Antiseptics are chemical agents similar to disinfectants, but they **may be applied** safely to living tissue. **Note:** Soap **only removes** microorganisms.

Important: Remember the doctrine of sterilization — Do not disinfect what you can sterilize!



1. The immersion of dental instruments in cold disinfectants **will not destroy** spores or the hepatitis viruses. (*They are resistant to physical and chemical agents*)
2. **Liquids** are generally **sterilized by filtration**. The most commonly used filter is composed of nitrocellulose and has a pore size of 0.22 **µm**. This size will retain all bacteria and spores.
3. Filters work by **physically** trapping particles larger than the pore size.