



# Spaulding Classification System

**CRITICAL:** A device that may come into contact with sterile tissue should be sterile. Such devices should minimally be sterilized, which is defined as the destruction of all microbial life. In the case of ultrasound probes, high-level disinfection is acceptable as a sterile cover is used.

**Sterilization:** All viable microorganisms must be destroyed.

**SEMI-CRITICAL:** A device that may come into contact with intact mucous membranes and does not ordinarily penetrate sterile tissue. These devices should minimally receive high level disinfection, which is defined as the destruction of all vegetative bacteria, mycobacteria, enveloped and non-enveloped viruses, fungal spores, and some bacterial spores.

**High Level Disinfection:** All viable microorganisms must be destroyed, except a small number of bacterial spores.

**NON-CRITICAL:** Devices that do not ordinarily contact the patient or contact only intact skin. These devices should be low level disinfected.

**Low level Disinfection:** Most vegetative bacteria and viruses destroyed, except bacterial spores, mycobacteria, fungi, or small non-lipid viruses.